UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

AN EXAMINATION OF FACILITATION IN THREE POPULAR THEATRE PROJECTS WITH YOUNG ADULTS

BY

Ⓒ CAROLINE MARGARET HOWARTH

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled AN EXAMINATION OF FACILITATION IN THREE POPULAR THEATRE PROJECTS WITH YOUNG ADULTS submitted by CAROLINE HOWARTH in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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David Barnet

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James Hackler

June 23, 1994

This thesis is dedicated to

Dr. Brian George Howarth

Abstract

This thesis is an examination of facilitation approaches and techniques in three popular theatre projects with high risk young adults, which took place in Edmonton between September, 1987 and August, 1989.

The first chapter establishes the context for the projects by providing a working definition of popular theatre and background to the development of popular theatre in Canada. It examines the major influences on the facilitators of these three projects including the collective theatre tradition, the work of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal, third world popular theatre and the popular theatre scene in Edmonton.

The three central chapters of the thesis provide a detailed description and analysis of each project with a focus on facilitation. Chapter two examines the Safe House and Friends Project and the production of Hidden Truths. Chapter three looks at the Youth Quest Theatre Project and the production of Fitting In, which was sponsored by the YMCA. Chapter four examines the Transitional Allies Project and the production of Letting Go and Taking Control, which was sponsored by the Edmonton Board of Health.

The final chapter offers a comparison of the three projects and a discussion of the questions and contradictions that arise out of an examination of facilitation in the three projects. It looks specifically at team facilitation,

collective working structure, the influence of professional counsellors in the facilitation process, working with a sponsoring agency and the responsibility of the facilitator for the style and content of the performance. Finally, I propose some guidelines for facilitation that can be drawn from a comparison of the three projects.

Preface

The goal of this thesis is to provide some insight into the role of the facilitator in the popular theatre process by examining three theatre projects involving high risk youth. In all three projects facilitation teams assisted groups of young people to develop theatre skills in order to create plays that reflected their experiences. In each case, the objective of the project was to give high risk youth an opportunity to express themselves by using theatre to tell their stories. Through the process of developing and performing the plays the participants developed skills in communication and cooperation and built their self-esteem.

It is not my purpose in this thesis to propose a formula for popular theatre process, nor to suggest that there are hard and fast rules for facilitation, as every project has a distinct character; the individuals involved and their environment have specific needs which require particular responses. However, I hope that other facilitators will be able to use this analysis to see how and why choices were made in these projects and how the choices impacted the processes and outcomes of the projects. Further, some basic guidelines regarding facilitation approaches do arise out of this discussion which I believe are applicable to other community-based popular theatre projects.

In order to examine the issues of facilitation that are raised by these projects, I will tell the story of each project with a focus on the facilitation process. As with popular theatre, the story precedes analysis; it also illuminates the inherent issues and contradictions.

I think it is important for the reader to understand my involvement in each of the projects because my personal association with them colours my perspective. The first project, Safe House and Friends, was facilitated by an instructor and students from a University of Alberta collective theatre class who worked with young female residents of a group home operated by Catholic Social Services. I was not directly involved in the play development process but in the final weeks of the project I assisted with technical elements of the performance and promotion of the production. I was a member of the facilitation team for the latter two projects, both of which were facilitated by students and recent graduates of the University of Alberta Drama Department, one of whom had participated in The Safe House and Friends Project. The participants in the second project, Youth Quest, were young adults from the YMCA Job Generation Youth Employment Program and the third project, Transitional Allies, involved young people who had participated in one or both of the previous projects.

All three projects passed through moments of crisis and jubilation. Ultimately the plays were successfully presented and participants and facilitators gained experience and confidence.

Much of this thesis is based on personal observation and discussion with the other facilitators. The work of a facilitator in a popular theatre project is very much in the moment and there is very little time to reflect on or analyse the process of facilitating. Most of the individuals who facilitated these projects, including myself, had minimal facilitation experience and developed their approaches and skills as the projects progressed. For both the participants and the facilitators these projects were very much an example of learning by doing.

My motivation for writing this thesis was to critically examine the approaches and techniques of this practical work. I hope this thesis will be useful to community development workers, youth workers and theatre workers who have an interest in using popular theatre with young adults as a way for them to share their experiences and develop skills.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the commitment and courage of the young people who participated in these theatre projects. Thank you to the Lisa Sokoluk, Brenda Harper, Bethany Ellis, David Barnet, Mieko Ouchi, Clint Cornish and Elinor Holt for their support and assistance. Finally, thank you to Betty Gibbs for reading and re-reading.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Popular Theatre in Canada

> "We call this 'popular theatre' because it attempts to give those who don't always have a voice a chance to speak out."[1]

This statement, from an Edmonton Journal interview with Professor David Barnet, defined the intent of The Safe House and Friends Project but it can be applied to popular theatre projects generally. The primary objective of much popular theatre work, including the projects to be examined in this thesis, is to give voice to a marginalized population. These projects were undertaken to assist groups of young adults to articulate and share issues and stories that were important to them. The projects were initiated with the intention of providing a theatrical means for the participant groups to share stories, identify issues and express themselves to the larger community. In this thesis I will look at the approaches and methods employed by the facilitators to enable this process to occur.

The three projects took place between December 1987 and August 1989 in Edmonton. They originated with the support of different social service agencies which had varying degrees of impact on the processes. In each project young people from high-risk backgrounds (street youth and chronically unemployed youth) were involved in the creation and performance of plays based on their experiences. I will examine each project individually and then compare them, focusing on facilitation choices made to meet specific situations and challenges. Because the projects had several similarities, including the background of the participants, the level of experience of some of the facilitators and the subject matter of the final productions, some valuable comparison is possible.

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[1] David Barnet quoted in Diana Coulter, "Street kids re-live their abuse, pain in play at U of A," Edmonton Journal, 11 December, 1987.

Popular theatre can be defined as theatre which gives a voice to people and becomes a vehicle to identify, analyse and communicate their ideas and concerns.[2] This definition is broad enough to encompass a wide range of theatre experiences while including a fundamental objective of popular theatre work, providing theatrical skills as tools for analysis so people can explore and tell their stories and express their concerns.

Within a Canadian context, popular theatre includes a wide variety of theatrical events ranging from Company Town, a play created by the Mummers Troupe of Newfoundland about life in the mining town of Buchans, to native teens at the Poundmaker Drug and Alcohol Abuse Treatment Centre in Alberta using theatre in a workshop setting to explore the issue of dating violence[3]. In the first example a troupe of professional actors used their skills to relate the stories and issues of Newfoundland miners. In the second, young people worked with theatre facilitators to exchange their ideas and attitudes about relationships and dating violence. In both these examples and in the projects to be studied in this thesis, theatre becomes a tool for expressing and analysing ideas, concerns and stories in order that the participants and in some cases the audience reach a deeper understanding of them.

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[2] David Barnet, see also Alan Filewod, "Popular Theatre," Canadian Theatre Review Winter 1987: 3.

Popular theatre in Canada grew out of the collective theatre movement of the 1970's. Over the years it has been strongly influenced by the work of third world popular theatre workers.

The contemporary Canadian collective theatre movement was heavily influenced by the work of Paul Thompson and Theatre Passe Muraille in Ontario in the 1970's. Thompson and his company of actors developed a method of gathering and developing material through research, interviews and improvisation. Theatre Passe Muraille was seeking to develop theatre that reflected a Canadian cultural identity and a Canadian voice. They worked in specific communities and developed plays which reflected the life of that community. The company's first major success was The Farm Show, which premiered in an un-used barn near Clinton, Ontario, in 1972. The play celebrated the community and its residents; people saw themselves and their stories on stage from the perspective of actors from the city. The Farm Show toured across Canada, building connections between rural audiences and giving urban audiences new insights into rural life. Theatre Passe Muraille used a similar collective process to create plays dealing with Canadian history (1837: The Farmers' Revolt,1973), and social issues such as sexuality (I Love You, Baby Blue,1975). This kind of collective or documentary theatre has had a strong influence on the development of popular theatre in Canada because it uses the stories and experiences of the community to create theatre and brings their voice to the stage.

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[3] Love, Anger and the Media was a theatre workshop developed by Wendy Philpott and Lisa Sokoluk of Concrete Theatre. The project consisted of a series of theatre exercises that explored media images of relationships, expectations, dating relationships and dating violence. The objectives of the project were to provide information about dating violence and abuse, encourage dialogue about the issues, provide an opportunity for participants to practise interventions and build an action plan for participants to implement in their school or community. The workshop was done with junior high schools, youth groups and treatment centres (including Poundmaker) in Edmonton and Northern Alberta between September 1992 and February 1993.

The Mummers Troupe of Newfoundland (1972 to 1980) was a politically oriented collective theatre company that created plays to resurrect traditional Newfoundland cultural forms (The Mummers Plays, 1971 to 1980) and to raise political awareness. They developed productions such as The East End Story(1975), which was commissioned by the Community Planning

Association of Canada as a development project in St. John's and They Club Seals Don't They(1977), which examined the affect of the seal hunt on the Newfoundland economy. Chris Brookes, the artistic director of The Mummers, defined his work as popular theatre because it speaks to the common woman or man in her or his language and idiom and deals with problems of direct relevance to her or his situation.[4]

The main goal of many of these collectively developed plays was to create an effective theatrical experience for the audience. The focus of the work of Passe Muraille, The Mummers and other Canadian collective theatre companies, such as 25th Street Theatre in Saskatoon and Theatre Network in Edmonton, was on creating theatrical productions that reflected the community and would connect with their audiences, building awareness and understanding of an issue or a community. In some cases productions were intended to move the people who saw them to take political action. The projects were performance oriented and occasionally a playwright and a director were involved in working with the actors to analyse and shape the material they had gathered.

Many of the techniques of play development that were used by these collective companies have been adapted by teachers, social service agency workers and popular educators for use with students, clients and community members to create plays about their issues and concerns. Some of these projects have been developed in conjunction with theatre companies that provide expertise and experience.

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[4] Ross Kidd, "Popular Theatre and Political Action in Canada," printed by Participatory Research Group, Toronto.

In these projects there has been a shift away from professional actors creating a voice for a community to emphasis on giving members of a community the tools to use their own voices to develop theatre that is for the people and by the people. The active involvement in creating the play gives people the opportunity to analyse issues themselves and to develop the skills to transmit their message in their own way without it being filtered through the perception of a group of actors who come from outside the community. This is popular theatre created by people with a need to tell their stories and share their views.

Ross Kidd, a popular theatre practitioner from Canada who is based in Africa, sees great strength in this type of theatre.

> It may lack the polish of professionalism but it will make up for this with the authenticity and concern of the people who live the situation they are presenting. The non-professional acts from the motivation of communication, not a motivation of self-sell. Lack of technical skill will be overcome by great energy and vividness. Above all their ethical relationship to the material helps them to hold the audience. For its specific purpose - to make social criticism, to raise awareness, to move people to action - this type of theatre

works[5]

Kidd feels that this type of theatre is effective because it brings forward the voice of the people who have the greatest stake in the issues. The process of developing a play can have a profound effect on the creators/performers in terms of deepening their understanding of the issues and in building their facility for speaking out. Much of the popular theatre work in Canada today takes this approach.

Although popular theatre in Canada is a descendent of the collective theatre movement it has evolved and developed through other influences such as the work done by practitioners in the developing world. Their work has been brought to Canada through exchanges, workshops, theatre festivals and articles in theatre and social justice publications.

The current popular theatre, or theatre for development, began in the third world in the 1950's when plays were created by government agencies to deliver information about issues such as health care. In the 1960's, theatre workers from government agencies and universities began to reach out into communities to gather information to create plays which built awareness about social and political issues. In the 1970's, there was a movement toward involving people from the communities in the creation and performance of theatre productions which analysed their concerns and issues. This led to an effort to include traditional performance forms, such as music and dance, in the analysis of material and performance. This move towards more community involvement has led to projects that are initiated by community organizations rather than university or government theatre workers. In some cases entire communities have participated in a popular theatre project. For example, in the village of Kamiriithu, Kenya, a community organization of peasants and workers in a literacy program developed a play to articulate the analysis of their circumstances and instigate discussion in the community. Ultimately almost the entire community joined in some aspect of producing the play. The project included the building of a two thousand seat open-air theatre. In the process and performance people discussed and analysed their history of anti-colonial struggle and their current situation of landlessness, unemployment, poverty and exploitation. The Kenyan government saw this consciousness raising project as a threat, banned the performances and razed the theatre.[6]

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[5] Kidd, Ross. "Popular Theatre and Political Action in Canada," printed by Participatory Research Group Toronto, 8.

Practitioners such as Ross Kidd and Michael Etherton in Africa, place emphasis in their work on social critique with an aim of structural transformation. Theatre is a tool for analysis and awareness building used in an on-going struggle towards change.

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[6] H. Ndumbe Eyoh, Hammocks to Bridges (Cameroon: BET and Co. Ltd., 1986) 21.

Ross Kidd, From People's Theatre for Revolution to Popular Theatre for Reconstruction: Diary of a Zimbabwean Workshop (The Hague: Cuso, 1984) 8.

> In this approach the theatre performance is not the total experience; it must be linked with critical analysis, organization and struggle. The performance can provide a dialectical view of the world but this must be consolidated and sharpened through dialogue and action; it must be part of a continuing process in which past action (struggle) provides the dramatic material (a historical view of reality) for analysis and strategy leading to future action (struggle).[7]

This view of popular theatre as a tool in an on-going struggle towards political and social transformation has raised questions for Canadian popular theatre workers regarding the level of political analysis in their work. In Canada, popular theatre work tends to centre on building awareness of issues and is often presented as an isolated theatre project or event that is not part of an on-going political or social action. Some popular theatre projects have come under criticism for making people aware of oppression but not providing any follow-up or action planning.

In theatre projects that directly involve marginalized communities, such as street youth, the work often focuses on personal experience with an emphasis on analysis of personal issues. This analysis can be viewed as a step toward developing the skills needed to take on larger and more complex social and political issues.

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[7] Ross Kidd, "People's Theatre, Conscientisation, and Struggle," Media Development 27 (1980): 10.

Popular theatre has its theoretical basis in the works of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and the Brazilian director Augusto Boal who applied Freire's concepts in a theatre context. Freire's work and writings focus on a dialogical approach to education and leadership. He promotes a method of education that involves both teacher and student or leader and follower in discussion and decision making, a dialogical or two way approach. He believes in the strength of cooperative or collective action as a means of change; "we cannot say that in the process of revolution someone liberates someone else, nor yet that someone liberates himself, but rather that men in communion liberate each other."[8] This idea underlies the collective process in a popular theatre project. The role of the leader or facilitator in a collective requires the ability to work with the group without imposing or taking control.

> Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people - they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress.[9]

Freire is referring to revolutionary political movements in his writing but the idea that the role of the facilitator is to work with the group is applicable to a theatre situation.

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[8] Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1989) 128.

[9] Freire 179.

The group will never take responsibility and control of their actions if the facilitator imposes decisions or actions. It is liberating for a group, particularly a marginalized group, to take responsibility and control of a project. They are empowered by taking control of their actions.

In a strong popular theatre process the facilitators are committed to giving the control of the project over to the community who are creating it. The community working together as a collective becomes a powerful force for action and change.

Augusto Boal developed a highly interactive form of theatre based on Freire's ideas. Boal grounds his approach to theatre in the belief that traditional (Aristotelian, cathartic, moralistic) theatre forms are highly political because they seek to maintain the status quo by celebrating current social and political organization. Boal writes that Brecht broke away from traditional theatre forms by developing theatre which challenged the audience to question the status quo. Boal takes this idea of questioning the status quo a step further in his Forum Theatre or Theatre of the Oppressed, by directly involving the audience in learning to change the system by taking the place of characters in the play who are facing oppression and making decisions. Boal creates forum theatre plays with community members as well as actors to analyse current social and political circumstances. He calls theatre a rehearsal for revolution because it offers people the opportunity to develop strategies and practise the skills that they can apply to overturn oppression.

The theories and principles expressed by Freire and Boal are a foundation of Canadian popular theatre work, although the theories have been adapted to a Canadian context where people tend to shy away from using terms like "oppression" and "revolution". Canadian popular theatre practitioners are working towards change of existing social structures by utilizing theatre for awareness building and critical analysis.

Much popular theatre work in Canada in the 1980's placed emphasis on personal history and storytelling relating to the individuals' relationship to society and family. By telling their own stories the participants built self-esteem and communication skills. These skills are a prerequisite for engaging effectively in critical analysis of social structures which leads to looking at ways to initiate change.

This focus on personal skill development has some links to psychodrama, which is a technique employed in psychotherapy. As in popular theatre process, theatre is used to examine personal issues and past experiences. J.L. Moreno developed his techniques of psychodrama to allow his patients to re-live certain past experience through role play. Psychodrama both encourages and provides a direct vehicle (role play) through which the individual actually re-experiences the central issues of his or her life. Instead of talking about her or his problems, the protagonist (the central figure in the role play) is plunged again into the midst of her or his emotional reality, as if for the first time. The protagonist works with the therapist and other members of the therapy group to debrief what they have learned through a role play session. Role plays in this context are intended strictly for the therapeutic benefit of the protagonist. There is no rehearsal or preparation involved and although the role play is viewed by the therapy group it is not a performance. The focus and primary objective of psychodrama is the therapeutic benefit which the participant gains in understanding her or himself and her or his relationships. The group members, guided by the therapist, assist each other to play out scenes which result in new personal understanding.

In contrast, the focus and primary objective of the popular theatre process is to create a play to communicate with an audience or take part in a workshop which provides a group voice for the participants to work together to build awareness and share, explore and analyse issues and situations. Therapeutic benefits such as increased confidence and self-esteem and skill development in communication and cooperation are secondary results of the theatre development process. Although some of the techniques are similar, popular theatre workers are not engaging participants in therapy.

In the last fifteen years many projects and programs have developed across Canada which draw from Freire, Boal and the collective tradition. These projects utilise different techniques and involve different populations but they all use theatre as a tool for sharing concerns, telling stories, analysing issues, building self-esteem and expanding communication skills. Many of these projects focus on young people who are engaged by the active nature of theatre.

For example, the Kensington Youth Theatre Employment Service, KYTES, has been operating in Toronto, Ontario, since 1983. This service for street youth uses theatre to provide skill development as part of a program that includes career counselling and high school upgrading. KYTES offers highly structured five month programs which culminate in the performance of collectively developed productions on issues of importance to the young people. The Theatre of the Oppressed techniques of Augusto Boal are used by the young people, who write, direct, design and perform productions that are presented for audiences in the community. KYTES believes that involvement in the theatre process builds self-esteem, communication skills and responsibility. The objective of the program is to provide street youth with skills which will enable them to continue their education and/or find employment. In the past, funding was available to pay the participants for their time on the project. Wages provided a strong incentive for regular attendance, focus and commitment. KYTES is supported by the community and Metro Toronto Social

Services. This program is successful in assisting young adults to get off the streets and is respected by youth in Toronto. The majority of the young people who participate in the program are now referred by friends who have been through the program.[10]

In Edmonton, the Inner City Drama Association (ICDA)[11] has been offering weekly drama programs for inner city children and teens for the last eight years. The focus of the program is on empowering young people to identify and make choices in their lives by giving them a safe, structured environment where they are free to make decisions and share their ideas. The guiding principle of ICDA is that the theatre projects belong to the participants and the facilitators take a back-seat role. ICDA is committed to providing ongoing programming and support for inner city youth including creating a system where long-time participants become facilitators for the childrens' programs. ICDA has been successful in providing support and skill development through their drama programs with Edmonton's inner city youth. In response to the needs of the participants, ICDA is now operating a high school for students who have dropped out of the regular school system and is also running a residence.

In 1987, when the first of the theatre projects that are the subject of this thesis was initiated, both the theatre community and social service agencies in Alberta were recognising theatre as a useful tool for community development, awareness raising and analysis of social issues.

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[10] Sarah Pointer, Telephone interview, 5 January 1994.

[11] The Inner City Drama Association has recently (Spring 1994) changed its name to Inner City Youth Development Association.

Catalyst Theatre, a popular theatre company, is a major force in the Edmonton theatre community and has generated interest in using theatre in non-traditional ways. They are innovators in using popular theatre in the community and have built an understanding among community development workers, teachers and social service agencies that theatre is a powerful tool for building awareness and initiating change.

Catalyst Theatre developed out of a University of Alberta Drama Department collective theatre course taught by David Barnet in 1977. The company's early projects were collectives created by professional actors on issues such as alcohol abuse and stress. Early in its development, Catalyst began to explore participatory theatre to involve audiences directly in the performance. They created a number of participatory productions that engaged audiences in advising and discussing the issues faced by characters.

In the 1980's, influenced by third world popular theatre work, Catalyst increased the degree to which they worked closely with the community on projects. Collective theatre projects were developed such as the Native Youth Theatre Project in Wabasca-Demarais (1984-87), and the Ben Calf Robe School Project, a series of collective plays developed with native teens (1988-90).

The Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) played a fundamental role in the development of popular theatre in this province by providing funding to theatre projects beginning with a pre-Catalyst project, Drinks Before Dinner(1977). AADAC's prevention programs placed emphasis on increasing people's capacity to learn, grow and assume greater control over their lives. To meet this goal AADAC was highly supportive of community development initiatives, including theatre projects.

Another major influence on the facilitators of the three projects which are the subject of this thesis was their involvement in courses in the University of Alberta Department of Drama, where a concentration in popular and collective theatre has developed through the influence of David Barnet who developed a strong community based undergraduate drama program. He taught all of the facilitators during their time at the University of Alberta and was the leader of the facilitation team in the Safe House Project.

Barnet pioneered the adaptation of collective and documentary theatre techniques to develop plays focusing on social issues. During the 1970's and 80's he directed class projects which created collective plays on topics such as rape, gender and alcoholism; Drinks Before Dinner led to the formation of Catalyst Theatre. Barnet also created Catalyst Television, a CBC series which aired participatory plays with a studio audience. Barnet's work in the department was influenced by his contact with Ross Kidd, Michael Etherton and other third world popular theatre practitioners.

Barnet led the senior level collective theatre class, Drama 459, that initiated the Safe House and Friends Project. The practical component of this class was to experience the collective play process but there was also a theoretical element which included discussion of collective theatre, Freire, Boal, third world and Canadian popular theatre. This background informed the practical work of Barnet and the student facilitators. Further, the approach and methods used in the first project were carried on and adapted by the facilitators as they moved on to the other projects.

Chapter Two

The Safe House and Friends Project

Hidden Truths

The Safe House and Friends Project took place over a four month period in the Fall of 1987 at the University of Alberta. The facilitators worked with young women from the Catholic Social Services' group home, Safe House, using collective play development techniques to create and perform the play Hidden Truths.

There were several factors in place from the outset of the process that had a strong influence on the nature of the facilitation of this project. The facilitation team was a class from the University of Alberta, comprised of three senior undergraduate students and instructor David Barnet. Because the project was part of their class work there was a specific, limited time frame and the expectation that there would be some kind of performance at the end of term. Also, the facilitation team, and consequently the project, had a distinct leader. The project participants were young women who lived together in a group home for ex-street youth and were involved in an intense therapy process. There was a high level of personal risk attached to their involvement in the project because they were emotionally sensitive and volatile. A further factor was the involvement of the social workers from the group home, who were integral to the process. They provided support to the participants and a safety net for the facilitators in case disclosures or other crises arose for the participants. The presence of the social workers made it possible to take risks.

The students who became facilitators of this project, Lisa Sokoluk, Bethany Ellis and Brenda Harper, all in their early twenties, had an interest in popular theatre process but minimal practical experience in theatre or in working with young people. David Barnet, the course instructor, has an extensive background in collective, participatory and documentary theatre through his teaching at the University of Alberta and work with Catalyst Theatre and Catalyst Television. He had worked in India with Jagran, a popular theatre mime troupe working in New Delhi, and in the Philippines with the Philippine Educational Theatre Association. Neither Barnet nor the other facilitators had much experience working closely with street youth.

The small size of the class led to the decision to create a collective with a group from the community. Working with young people was of particular interest to the women in the class. Criteria were established for selecting a group to collaborate with: first, they must be committed to the project; second, participation in a theatre project must contribute to the group's on-going objectives; third, they must have the capacity for flexible cooperation; fourth, they must have enthusiasm for achieving their own objectives and completing the theatre project; fifth, there must be a minimum of five group members.[12]

These objectives reflected the facilitators' desire to avoid the lengthy process of building an ensemble and finding common issues to explore, steps which would be necessary if a group was created specifically for their project. The facilitators were aware that in order to establish a good working environment for the project they would require cohesiveness, a high level of trust, and commitment from themselves and the participants.

One of the facilitators had acted in a television commercial for The Catholic Social Services' group home, Safe House. She felt that they would be interested in doing a theatre project. Safe House was chosen over other Edmonton youth agencies, such as the Youth Emergency Shelter or the Youth Detention Centre, for several reasons: the young women at Safe House were in residence for an extended period of time, residents were involved in an intensive therapy process, social workers were willing to support the project and residents already had some experience of using role play in the context of group therapy sessions.[13] The social workers felt that the residents would be willing to commit time to this beneficial project, which might complement their group therapy by building self-esteem and validating personal experience. Everyone at the house had recently watched a CBC television documentary called "Runaways", which followed the lives of several street kids, and the residents had expressed interest in telling their stories in a similar fashion. The airing of this program was a valuable coincidence because it showed the young women that they had important stories to tell.

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[12] Lisa Sokoluk. Project Journal. 1987. The journal is a series of notes made during the project. Not all entries are dated.

[13] Lisa Sokoluk. Project Journal. September 22, 1987.

From the point of view of the facilitators, Safe House offered a participant group who knew each other well, and because the participants lived in the same place it was relatively easy to arrange work sessions and transportation to rehearsals. The social workers were excited about the potential of the project and were willing to offer their support. Bev Oldham, the director of the house, was enthusiastic. "When can you begin this? Would tomorrow be too soon?"[14]

The young women at Safe House offered a challenging community for the project. They ranged in age from thirteen to twenty and came from backgrounds with histories of broken families, sexual and physical abuse, and life on the streets. Some of the young women had been involved in prostitution and had problems with drugs and alcohol. The agreement for living at Safe House included no using of drugs or alcohol, attending school or life skills classes regularly, sharing in daily household chores and participating in the group therapy program run by the social workers. Many of the women who lived at the house had recently left the street and were experiencing difficulty adapting to life off the streets. They had trouble interacting in group situations and trusting others. The facilitators willingly accepted the challenges but they identified the need for support from the Safe House staff.

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[14] Brenda Harper. Project Journal. September 22, 1987.

After an initial administrative meeting with the group home director the facilitators met with the residents to "check each other out". The facilitators did not know what to expect but were careful not to put any pressure on the potential participants. In her journal Lisa Sokoluk described the first approach to Safe House as "sincere if naive". The residents were wary of the unknown facilitators but were curious about the project. The fact that the students from the university were female and quite close in age to the residents helped to create a casual atmosphere. David Barnet was the only male involved in the project but he approached the situation in an easy, relaxed manner that was non-threatening to the residents.[15]

After about half an hour of casual conversation, the facilitators introduced the drama project proposal. "We want to do a play with you - about whatever."[16] The decision had been made earlier to accept any topic the residents suggested. The proposal was met with guarded approval from the residents, who were still testing the situation. Then the facilitators asked each person what they would like to make a play about: one young woman said she would like to do a play to tell other kids not to get into bad situations; another said, "Comedy, I'd really like to make people laugh."[17] The general consensus in the group was that they would like to create a play about their experiences.

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[15] Lisa Sokoluk. Project Journal. September 24, 1987.

[16] Lisa Sokoluk. Project Journal. September 24, 1987.

The social worker at the meeting suggested doing some of the role plays they had been working on. Role play was used in therapy sessions so that the young women could explore relationships or replay events from their lives and examine their actions and perhaps try making different choices. The counsellor and the other young women played roles in each other's scenarios. After each role play the participants talked about how it felt to play the scene and how it might help them to deal with a real situation.

The facilitators were invited to participate in the role plays. In one role play a young woman confided in her parents, played by Lisa Sokoluk and Bethany Ellis, that she was pregnant by her grandfather. Ellis's portrayal of the mother was based on her own understanding and experience. She was gentle and sympathetic towards her daughter. During the scene the daughter kept saying, "Why are you acting like this?

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[17] Lisa Sokoluk. Project Journal. September 24, 1987.

You never cared about me before." This event had a profound effect on the facilitators, who as a result realized how different the life experience of these young women was from their own.

This first meeting and the role plays gave the facilitators their first look into the world of these young women. The student facilitators were able to connect to the participants on one level because they could share stories about high school and certain teen experiences. However, much of the life experience was completely foreign to the facilitators: abuse, lack of family support, undermined self-esteem and trust.

The facilitators learned some important things through their participation in the role plays. In their past experience of improvisation the job of the actors was to play off one another and accept each other's ideas in order to keep the scene moving forward. In these role plays the object was to analyse past events or to create realistic situations for the participants to respond to. To do this effectively all of the participants needed a similar background to draw from.

The facilitators could not draw from their own lives to participate in role plays or in scenes later in the process. This problem led to a system of coaching so that the participants could teach the facilitators how to play certain roles. For example, role coaching was used extensively in a scene where Lisa Sokoluk played an abusive alcoholic mother.

Sokoluk presented her version of the character. The participants watched and stopped her to tell or show her how to move, what kind of language to use and how to relate to her children. Coaching ensured that the characters were true to the experience of the participants but it limited the freedom of the facilitators to create well-rounded or complex characters. The coached characters were representations of the participants' attitude towards the person who was being portrayed.

The initial project meeting was a valuable learning experience for the facilitators but it was equally important for the residents to find out about the facilitators. The young women at the house were very guarded in their first responses to the project because they were used to protecting themselves against exploitation. The events at the first session were steps towards getting past this barrier and building a trusting relationship with the facilitators. The fact that the facilitators came to their space and were willing to participate in their activities helped this process, which was to continue throughout the project.

After the first meeting at Safe House most of the residents were interested in working on the project. Participation was not mandatory and as the process progressed some residents dropped out and others decided they would participate. Over the course of the four months new women came to live at the house and some of them joined the project.

Eight young women participated in the final presentation; seven lived at Safe House and one lived on her own but attended therapy sessions at the house.

In order to structure the discussion of this project, I have broken the process down into five phases: the first phase involves setting up the project objectives and initial group building; the second phase involves developing theatre skills and gathering material for the play; the third phase involves dramatising material and developing the play; the fourth phase is the rehearsal and technical preparation of the performance; and the fifth phase is the performance and any follow-up. In practice these phases blend into one another but they do provide a framework for the main steps in the process.

In the first phase of the project, building trust between the participant group and the facilitators, which had started at the first meeting, was a main objective. Improvisation trust exercises such as Blindwalk helped to establish relationships where the participants and facilitators felt comfortable and safe working together. The first blindwalk was done during the second session at Safe House. The participants were paired with facilitators. In this exercise one person is blindfolded and the other leads them on a walk around a specified area. The leader has control of their partner and is responsible for ensuring her or his safety. The participants seemed to enjoy being the leaders in this exercise because it gave them power. The participants and facilitators were working on an equal level.

After the second session at Safe House the facilitators decided that they would move sessions to the university where there was more space to work. The participants were excited to work in a rehearsal hall on the campus where there were props and rehearsal furniture. On the first trip to the university the participants went on a tour of the Fine Arts Centre and saw the acting classroom where they might perform their play. The move, at this point in the process, gave the participants encouragement because it made the project important and special. It was a positive experience for the participants to feel that people from the university were interested in what they had to say.[18]

A final step in the first phase of the project was to discuss the content of the play and talk about the stories each person wanted to tell. The participants were asked to articulate their ideas about what the final play could be. A list of the participants' objectives for the play came out of this session. Some of these ideas were issues which the participants were dealing with on a daily basis in group therapy:

> 1. To show people what really happens, what street life is really like - survival, violence, addiction
>
> 2. When you get trapped to find a way to keep from running away

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[18] Annahita Wilson, Personal interview, 12 September 1991.

3. To show kids who are going through it where to get help

4. How to find the courage to say "No" to people

5. How not to throw the first punch

6. There is help, accept love, you don't always have to be scared inside.[19]

This process was the participants' first opportunity in the project to articulate the objectives or message of their play.

While group and trust building was happening in the drama sessions the facilitators were developing their methods for working as a team and were establishing relationships with the social workers at Safe House.

The facilitators' working method grew directly out of the structure of their university course and the needs of the project. The facilitators worked as a team, with the student facilitators giving input to the decision making process but depending heavily on David Barnet for expertise and leadership. Lisa Sokoluk felt that the student facilitators were acting as Barnet's "eyes and ears", monitoring the process and gathering information about the participants so that he could plan the next step.[20] The student facilitators were learning from Barnet's experience and playing a vital role in the facilitation process.

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[19] Lisa Sokoluk. Project Journal. 1987.

[20] Lisa Sokoluk. Project Journal. 1987.

The facilitators established that the guiding principle of the project was to make the voice of the participants heard. The process did not follow a set formula or theory but progressed in response to the needs of the participants and events in the drama sessions. The facilitators were flexible enough to modify or change the plan for a session if it was not working or if another approach suddenly seemed to be more appropriate. This method required that the facilitators trust their instincts and each other. If they misjudged a situation another member of the team was there for support. While Barnet had a great deal of experience to draw from to inform his instincts, the student facilitators did not have this experience; however, they were closer in age to the participants and were able to draw on personal experience to connect with the participants.

This approach to facilitation was dependent on having the time to analyse each session in order to assess the needs of the project and the participants. Team debriefing and planning for the Safe House Project took the form of weekly meetings lead by David Barnet. At these meetings the previous session was discussed in detail and the next session was planned and "rehearsed". In planning a session, the facilitators decided on all the activities and talked through what might happen and how they would respond. They selected games and exercises and ran through how they would explain them to the participants. In some cases they modified games to suit the participants' needs, for example they developed a cooperative version of musical chairs where the players had to help each other to find room on a decreasing number of chairs. In team meetings the facilitators were able to discuss their perceptions of the process on an ongoing basis; through discussion, suggestions built on each other to develop and expand new ideas. The team approach allowed the facilitators to give each other constant feedback and support, which increased their confidence in working with the participants. When the facilitators were very well prepared for each drama session they could more easily respond to the immediate needs of the participants.

During this first phase of the project the relationship between the facilitators and the social workers from Safe House was established. The facilitators needed a contact at the house who would be sensitive to the process and willing to attend the drama sessions. The social workers were valuable in dealing with problems, especially as the facilitators had limited experience working with high risk youth. If one of the participants chose to back out of an activity or became upset a social worker could deal with the problem while the facilitators were free to continue the session. The social workers could let the facilitators know if they were pushing too hard or exacerbating a problem. A call was made to the contact at the house before each session to find out how many people were coming and if there were any recent crises that might interfere with the session.

The facilitators would not have been as comfortable dealing with the participants if the social workers had not been present. It would have been riskier to encourage personal storytelling because of the problem of dealing with possible disclosures. The participants would have missed the opportunity to discuss issues and debrief sessions with the social workers. The participants' constant interaction with the social workers between drama sessions enhanced the therapeutic benefits of the process.

Two social workers shared responsibility for transporting participants and attending sessions. One became the main staff contact for the facilitators and attended the majority of sessions. She was able to gauge the mood of the group and could anticipate any problems that might occur. She observed and was a supportive presence in sessions and only became actively involved if there was a problem or if someone needed a "time out". Her presence in rehearsals was hardly felt until her intervention was required. The other social worker had a different approach to her role. She was much more active in the process and set herself up as an intermediary between facilitators and participants.

> (She) acted as a filter between the girls and us. She prevented us from getting too close to the girls in the psychological sense, in what seemed as a need to protect the girls. ...(she) was domineering and manipulative in a

> protective way. She basically "directed" the girls all evening in how to act, talk and behave; although it was done to be helpful to us, it instead hindered us to an extent.[21]

The facilitators needed to develop a strong bond with the participants and it was impossible to establish this if the girls were being monitored. The participants needed to feel that they were working with, not performing for, the facilitators and the social workers. This situation was dealt with by requesting that the social worker with whom the facilitators were more comfortable attend the sessions whenever possible.

The background of the participants and the role that the social workers played in the process affected the choices made by the facilitation team as they moved on to the next phase, gathering and dramatizing material.

Theatre games and exercises were part of every session. In the set-up phase they had been used for group and trust building. In the second phase games continued to work as group builders and they were also used to teach basic improvisation skills as well as to begin developing stories and characters for the play. The warm-up games became important in determining the mood of the group. The emotions and relationships at Safe House were extremely volatile and all the problems that had developed over the week came into the drama sessions on Thursday evenings. The games quickly revealed who were not getting along and allowed the facilitators to organize the evenings' proceedings accordingly. During the warm-up games participants often vied for attention and control.

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[21] Brenda Harper. Project Journal. 1 October, 1987.

The facilitators found that the most useful games were non-competitive and cooperative. They chose games that did not have a winner or loser and involved the entire group so that no one was singled out or left out. The facilitators joined in the games and exercises so that these activities became a time for the group to play together and have fun.

During this first phase of the project several problems arose in the group dynamic which had to be dealt with. After several sessions it became apparent that tension was developing over who was getting the most attention from the facilitators. The facilitators decided to work one-on-one or one-on-two with the participants to combat this tension and to create a safe environment for collecting stories for the play. Barnet introduced the "Everyone gets a turn" rule to ensure that everyone got an equal chance to speak. The rule, which applied to facilitators and participants, indicated that no one was more important than any other member of the group.

In the first session of the material gathering phase each facilitator worked closely with one or two of the young women, helping them to tell the stories that they wanted to put in the play. Each group worked on newsprint to map out the story using words and pictures. The use of pictures was vital because some members of the group did not have strong literacy skills; drawing provided them with a mode of expression. This method of telling and recording the stories gave each participant the opportunity to tell her story in her words without any judgement or pressure from the other participants. Working closely with a facilitator ensured that each participant was getting focused and equal attention. The facilitators were able to work with the participants with whom they identified most closely.

In this session small groups were established at the beginning of the night and they worked together through the warm-up exercises and the story telling. The strong sense of trust that grew out of the warm-ups continued through the demanding storytelling exercise, creating a situation where the facilitators were comfortable asking questions and pushing for detail to clarify the stories. The participants were comfortable sharing personal stories. It became evident that small group work was a good approach to use with this participant group because of their need for individual attention and reinforcement.

At the end of the first storytelling session each group shared the story they were working on with the rest of the group. These stories ultimately became the basis of the play. The stories all took the form of third person narratives on the page, but when they were shared with the group, the women began to talk in the first person. Sharing these personal stories with the group was difficult and emotional for the young women. Some of the stories had never been told publicly before.

> The most interesting aspect of this exercise with (her) was she told the story in third person narrative, referring to "the little sister, the older sister, the mother". Never did she personalize the story as she told it - it was outside of her so to speak. ...I naturally assumed she was the older sister, and she was telling the story of her own little sister and mother. It was one sentence that led me to believe this; "She (the older sister) really loves the little sister a lot. More than anything." When (she) got up to tell her story, I was surprised when she told us that she was the little sister running away. She internalized the story when she told it to the group. As the night wore on, it may have been harder to keep the story at a distance. The reality of the experience crept in, and so she internalized the story more and more as she spoke. By the end, (she) was crying silently, wiping the tears away as fast as they appeared. This may have been the first time (she) has actually seen her life, her experiences, portrayed in front of her - as it was on the piece of paper.[22]

As the process progressed the role of the facilitators became to assist the participants in dramatizing their stories. After the first storytelling session each participant had a story which would become "their" scene. The facilitators typed the stories for the participants so that each young woman had a permanent document of her story in her words to use in creating a scene. Typing the stories made them important and special to the participants. Each of the participants was given a binder to keep her notes, scripts and stories.

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[22] Brenda Harper. Project Journal. 15 October, 1987.

In the next phase of the process, the stories were dramatized in different ways and were fictionalized to varying degrees. The facilitators used a variety of methods to dramatize material which suited the way that an individual participant felt comfortable working.

Some of the participants continued to work with the facilitators using improvisation to develop their scenes. This was the case with the story of Alex[23] who ran away from home when her mother refused to believe the accusation that her boyfriend had sexually abused the daughter. This story became a composite of the experiences of several participants as they watched the scene grow and gave their input. The role of Alex in the scene was not played by the original storyteller because she was not comfortable doing it.

Improvisation was also used to develop the story of two sisters who lived with an abusive alcoholic mother. The older sister ran away from home following a violent fight with her mother. Later the younger sister ran away with a friend to try and find her sister. As with the other scene the participants who were acting in the scene and those watching helped with the development. In both these scenes the mothers were played by facilitators with coaching by the participants.

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[23] The names used in descriptions of the scenes are fictional character names.

In this improvisational approach to developing scenes the participants worked together and gave each other input. The facilitators guided the process so that the participants did not judge the material or each other but gave suggestions based on their experience.

Other participants were more comfortable working alone or with a single facilitator. Some scenes were scripted by the participants. Some of the participants worked one-on-one with facilitators to write monologues which were typed up and used in the play.

In the storytelling session one young woman told of how she ran away when a friend was murdered while working the streets. She said that she had never told this story to anyone before. She was dealing with her guilt and fear over the events for the first time. During a break, she asked the facilitators if she could sing a song which she had written. She did not want to sing it in front of the whole group because she thought they might think she was trying to get extra attention. She sang "Soul Rockin'".

> All my life I had a dream in my heart
> But my life as a child tore it apart
> A ward of the government at the mercy of society
> I broke out on my own for my true identity
> 'Cause I was soul rockin', I was soul
> I was soul rockin', soul rockin', soul rockin'
>
> I met a man and he had a clan

He made me part of his investment plan
He swept me up with cocaine and charms
And then he sent me into other men's arms

(chorus)
'Cause I was soul rockin', I was soul
I was soul rockin', soul rockin' soul rockin'
The harder you rock, the harder you roll
keep those dreams alive in your soul

I didn't sell my ass, I sold my soul
Didn't do it for money, gave my man the whole roll
He gave me love, he gave me hope
He gave me dope when I couldn't cope
(chorus)

I went for a ride on a never ending train
With a needle in my arm, searching for a main vein
So take out your chains, take out your knife
And cut me for another slice of life
Wouldn't be the first time this girl's been hurt
I'm just a hard luck woman, ditched in the dirt
(chorus)

Sold my soul for rock and roll
My Harley and leather done took its toll
Worked hard all my life as a clubber's wife
My body and soul took its human sacrifice
(chorus)[24]

By the time she finished singing, all the others had come back into the room. They did not react directly to the song but they all said that they would bring in their own songs or poetry to use in the play.

The following week the woman who had told the story about the murder brought in a complete script for "Sisters of the Street", which told her story in short scenes interspersed with verses of "Soul Rockin'" and two other well-known rock songs. In this original version of the scene, Rose, the central character, was in her hotel room deciding to give up drugs and straighten her life out immediately after the murder. David Barnet asked if that is what really happened. She said that in reality she had been terrified and that her heroine addiction grew worse as she had tried to forget what had happened; it was a long time after her friend was murdered that she decided to straighten herself out. The young woman brought a new monologue to the next rehearsal which told this version of the story. She hoped that telling this story would somehow get back at Bobby and Curtis, the pimps who had murdered her friend and got her hooked on drugs.

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[24] Music and lyrics by Annahita Wilson. Copyright 1987.

The question of how this scene would be presented became a major issue for the facilitators. David Barnet felt that the scripted scene was overly melodramatic and sentimental; the young woman wanted to end the scene by laying a rose on the grave of her friend and singing "The Rose". The other facilitators felt that she should do the scene the way that she wanted to. Sokoluk felt strongly that if you are going to impose your theatrical forms you might as well hire a playwright. Barnet felt strongly that the audience would not connect to the serious content of the scene because of the overly sentimental style; his responsibility as a facilitator was to ensure that the scene would succeed in accordance with the intention of the participant, which he felt was compromised by the style that she had chosen.[25]

Because of "Sisters of the Street" and the fact that another participant wanted to make a music video to tell her story, the question of how much the facilitators should impose their attitudes about theatre on the participants was a major issue in the planning meetings. As part of their course work the facilitators had been discussing the integration of traditional arts and culture in third world popular theatre projects. They realized that there was a parallel between the traditional folk styles used in projects in the third world and the popular culture forms that the participants in this project wanted to use. There continued to be a tension for the facilitators between respecting the cultural forms of the participants and ensuring that the audience would understand the scene. Sokoluk maintained that the scene would work because of the commitment of the performers to the material and the style.

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[25] Lisa Sokoluk. Project Journal. 1987.

In the case of "Sisters of the Street", Barnet acknowledged that the style of the scene was based in the participant's cultural context and should be performed as she intended. The facilitators also arranged for the music video to be made. Both these scenes were highly effective in the final production because the performers were committed and connected to the style and content.

Throughout the play development phase of the process the facilitators faced issues which affected participants' commitment and ability to take part in the project. The barriers to participation included low self-esteem, selfdefeating behaviour and conflicts with other participants. The facilitators felt that it was important to find a way for all participants to have a role in the play and that it was equally important that no one be pressured to do something that made them uncomfortable.

One resident from the house was extremely shy and quiet. She did not have a story in the play because she had run away from the house for several weeks and had missed the story board exercise. She wanted to be involved in the play but did not feel comfortable speaking because it made her feel overly exposed. Someone made the suggestion that she could be a mime. The following week she came to rehearsal with her face painted in black and white Pierrot makeup with a tear on one cheek. Eventually the figure was integrated into a number of the scenes in the play. Pierrot acted as a witness to the events. She revealed truth in the play. For example, in the first scene Pierrot stopped the action when the mother believed her daughter's disclosure of abuse. Pierrot rewound the scene and it was replayed with the mother refusing to believe her daughter and instead accusing her of leading on the abuser. This second version of the scene corresponded with the reality of the participants' life experience. The only time that Pierrot spoke was to recite "To the Abusive Alcoholic", a poem which the performer had written for her mother. She was able to present this highly personal statement without feeling exposed herself. The Pierrot character offered the participant a way to express her opinions and ideas in the play without the embarrassment of having to reveal her face.

The young woman who played the character felt that Pierrot represented the freedom of the streets, the freedom to do "whatever you want, just for now". Through the play, as Pierrot witnesses more violence and pain, she realises that the street is not freedom and she goes to Safe House where she is safe to remove her make-up and reveal her face.

The facilitators had to be very sensitive to the participants' need to feel comfortable with the performance of their stories. As part of the story telling exercise one young woman wrote a monologue which was used in a scene about a girl who had returned to school after living on the street.

> I ran away when I was twelve. I got hooked on drugs really bad. I was AWOL two to three months and I was always high. I met this girl Stacy, we were best friends, but now that I am straight I realize that no best friend would introduce you to drugs. So now I pick my best friends the right way. My best friend Stacy never trusted me and when she got a girl after me because she thought I had all her clothes, I realized she was not a friend. I knew her for four years, and it seems like I just met her, like I don't even know her at all. We worked the streets together, ripped off johns just to get money for a place to stay and drugs. Now if you call that a best friend there's something wrong with your brain my friend.[26]

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[26] From informal project notes collected by facilitators. 1987.

The writer was to play the central character in the scene and present her monologue. However, in rehearsal she would stop in the middle of the scene and say it was stupid and she felt stupid doing it. The facilitators and the other participants did not want to see the material cut from the play. During this time period a new resident had arrived at Safe House who wanted to participate in the play. She had established a close friendship with the writer of the monologue who asked her to take over the role. The facilitators believed that the writer wanted the material to be heard but could not perform it herself. They concluded that they would not be violating her privacy by letting the scene remain in the play because she had been very proud and excited when she first saw the monologue typed up and was supportive of her friend doing the monologue. The young woman who would not perform her own material was comfortable and confident playing characters in other scenes. If the facilitators had chosen to cut the scene from the play it might have encouraged her in feeling that her story was worthless.

During this phase of the project, an issue arose regarding the nature of the relationship between facilitators and participants outside the rehearsal hall. The facilitators were becoming trusted friends. One of the participants was calling the facilitators at home to discuss problems that they did not feel equipped to deal with. The facilitators attempted to maintain distance from the participants' personal lives but this was increasingly difficult as the project moved closer to the performance and the participants needed more support.

The close group work that had happened throughout the process linked with the idea of having a "best friend" to back you up, an idea that is very important in street culture. A true friend will not let you down. Within the context of the project the facilitators were filling this friend role. They listened to the participants, respecting them and their stories. The connection which the student facilitators made with the participants was strengthened because they were all female and close in age. David Barnet developed a strong relationship with the participants based on his role as a positive, supportive male figure. The majority of males with whom the participants dealt were either abusers, johns or authority figures in the legal or social service system. Barnet respected the participants and was always straightforward in this expectations of them. It became increasingly difficult, particularly for the student facilitators, to draw a line between the working relationship with the participants and the relationship beyond the rehearsal hall. The student facilitators gave the participants the support they needed to complete the project. This support was vital to the success of the project but in a sense the facilitators were taking on responsibility for the participants' success in the project.

The problem of jealousy between the participants continued to be a disruptive force in the process until the participants recognised that the play could not succeed if they did not support each other. The facilitators pushed the participants to this realization by giving equal support to everyone in the hope that the participants would not feel a need to compete for attention and would focus on the play.

The young woman who had created the "Sisters of the Street" scene took the brunt of a great deal of hostility because her scene demanded extra rehearsal due to its complexity and because this young woman was quite vocal in asking for help and reinforcement. Well into the play development process all but one of the participants refused to do her scene, which required a crowd. They said they would not do the scene because they did not want to play hookers and the scene did not show what working the street was really like. The problem was resolved because the facilitators continued to support the scene by taking on the extra roles. Eventually everyone grudgingly agreed to do the scene if the student facilitators would be in it as well. This decision was based partly on seeing that the scene would go on whether they agreed to support it or not. In the end the group enjoyed doing "Sisters of the Street" because it gave them the chance to dress up in their hooker clothes "one more time".

Several weeks into the process of dramatizing story material a confrontation occurred that signalled that the participants were taking control of the project. Two of the participants came into rehearsal and announced that the group had to stop wasting time and get on with rehearsing the play. "This is boring!" they said. "We aren't getting anywhere. We're not progressing. We're not working on specific things to do in the play, like lighting and set. We should be focusing on that, and the songs. What's in the beginning and what should we do for the end?"[27]

The participants accused the facilitators of wasting their time and blamed them because the project was not going anywhere. The incident made it clear that the play was really important to the participants and it meant that they were ready to commit to getting the play ready for performance. This event moved the process into the final rehearsal and performance phases.

The participants worked with the facilitators to finalize which scenes they wanted in the play and put them into some kind of order. The young women had taken responsibility for making the show happen. This was a very satisfying moment for the facilitators. Brenda Harper wrote in her journal that it was the first time that she felt that the show would happen.

This phase of the process, leading to performance, involved reworking and rehearsing the scenes for the play. Rehearsals were formalized as David Barnet assumed a directorial role and became more active in shaping the material. Other university drama students came into rehearsals to work on specific elements of the show: promotion, music, choreography, singing, lights, sound and stage management. The involvement of other students helped to further focus the commitment of the participants because the idea of performance became concrete. Responsibility for other aspects of the production such as set, costumes, props and publicity were divided; each facilitator took on a specific area of production with assistance from the participants. The participants made the poster for the show and helped to find props and costumes. In this stage of the process there continued to be problems between participants which were exacerbated by pre-performance nerves, but the energy and excitement of the performance provided momentum and focus needed to work through the problems.

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[27] Lisa Sokoluk. Project Journal. October 1987.

Hidden Truths had three "sold out" performances at the University of Alberta in December, 1987. The audience was made up of students and staff from the Department of Drama, social workers, friends of the performers and, at one performance, clients from the Youth Emergency Shelter. The project received positive and thoughtful media coverage from the Edmonton Journal and CBC Radio and Television.

David Barnet began each performance by thanking the audience for coming and explaining how the project developed.[28] He explained that all the material was developed by the young women performing it and that it was based on real experience. He introduced all the members of the project by name, including all the backstage crew and the social workers from the house. He said that the play was still developing and joked that, in some cases, the scene changes were longer than the scenes. This introduction to the show was extremely important because it established the context for the audience. The talk-back session that followed every performance was also important because it gave the audience an opportunity to express their feelings to the cast about the experiences they shared. The audience became part of the process by interacting with the performers and supporting them.

The journey of Hidden Truths parallels the real life experiences of the young women who created it; the characters move from violent homes, to the streets, and finally to Safe House where they find support and security. The first scenes show young women escaping abusive home situations. One woman leaves a home where she is sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend. Two sisters run away from an alcoholic, physically abusive mother. Subsequent scenes, including "Sisters of the Street", depict life on the street; hooking, drug abuse, violence and murder. A scene entitled "Willy and Elma" depicts a young woman who is unable to accept the love of her boyfriend because she was sexually abused by her grandfather. Another scene expresses the difficulties associated with returning to "normal" teenage life, as a girl is taunted by other high school students about her past. The final scene, "At Safe House", shows a typical evening at the group home and the arrival of a new resident, Pierrot. It is an affirmation for the performers that there is hope for a future off the streets. Throughout the play, the Pierrot figure, functioning as a chorus, watches and at times comments on or directs the action.

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[28] Description of Hidden Truths drawn from a videotape of the performance, recorded at the University of Alberta, 13 December, 1987.

The play mixes styles ranging from documentary realism to highly stylized rock opera to video. The language and presentation style of the scenes is generally heightened and less realistic when the material presented is graphic or painful. The language maintains the natural rhythm and syntax of the streets. The scenes are a mixture of improvised dialogue and original poetry, monologues and song lyrics written by the participants. The point of view expressed in the production is that of the young women. The adult figures, played by the facilitators, are almost exclusively abusive and are one dimensional presentations. This choice is taken to an extreme in the character of the abusive boyfriend, who is played by an actor in a featureless cardboard mask, making him an "everyman/anyman".

The social workers were at every performance to support the participants and all the student facilitators played roles in the show. The facilitators were active during the performance encouraging the participants, helping them prepare and congratulating them when they finished a scene. One scene, "Willy and Elma", was not performed at the first show because the young woman who had developed and was to perform it did not feel confident about doing it. When she presented the scene on the second night Lisa Sokoluk stood on stage with her to prompt her if she needed it. Sokoluk had worked closely with her in developing this scene and was continuing her supportive role. The participant was not ready to take the risk of presenting her scene for an audience until she witnessed the positive reaction of the audience on the first night. After performing the scene, she felt that it had been a major accomplishment, that she had overcome her fear of telling her story.

Hidden Truths had a strong emotional impact on audience members because they were seeing real and painful experiences presented on stage by those who had lived them. Audience members said they felt honoured and were humbled by the courage it took for the young women to tell their stories. Many members of the audience felt that it was important to see a show like Hidden Truths because it revealed an aspect of society that people try to ignore. Some young people recognized the situations and shared similar stories in the post-show discussion. These young people were excited by seeing their life experience reflected on the stage. The truth of the performance created a bond between the performers and audience, who became actively engaged in supporting the players.

The three days of performances were very exciting for everyone involved in the project. The participants and facilitators received an overwhelming amount of positive feedback from people who saw the play, their friends, the social workers and the media.

Many things were gained and learned by all the people who participated in this project. In an interview conducted by Diana Coulter of the Edmonton Journal, one of the participants said: "Some of the scenes bring back memories that I figured would be hard to deal with, but it's actually helped me get through them."[29] In an evaluation filled out at the end of the project another participant said that the things she liked about the project were "when there is input from others, reaching out to the public, everyone's ideas are heard out and tried." The counsellors from the house felt that the experience of doing the play had been valuable for their clients because it let the women work through particular problems and relationships. It gave the Safe House residents the opportunity to work together on a project with a positive and concrete product. They learned to work together and supported each other. The play offered them success and experience. They learned lines, stood in front of an audience and told their stories and were applauded for having the courage to do so.

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[29] Diana Coulter, "Street kids re-live their abuse, pain in play at U of A," Edmonton Journal, 11 December, 1987.

The facilitation system of allowing the needs of the project and the participants to guide the process was very successful in this project. To work in this manner required a large amount of time to plan and debrief each session. Team facilitation made it possible to monitor the process and the participants closely and it brought a variety of different experience to the project. David Barnet had extensive directing, acting and play development experience and the student facilitators could relate to the participants and were sensitive to their needs.

The issue of theatrical control over a popular theatre project which was raised in this production continued to be a central issue for the facilitator who moved on to the next project. The participants had control over the content of the show, but to a certain extent the final style and structure of the production came from the facilitators because the show had a strong director. This was not the case in the other two projects where the facilitators gave less input into the structure and style of the production and encouraged the participants to direct each other.

Facilitators may take participants' material and shape it into a theatrical form that will be accepted as "good theatre" by a theatre-literate audience or they can allow the participants to control the theatrical form of the play. In the case of the teens involved in these three projects, the presentation forms with which they were most familiar were television and movie realism and television soap-opera and melodrama. The teenage girls' vision of theatricality tended to be sentimental.

A facilitator's role in helping the participants to tell the initial stories is straightforward. They develop a relationship based on trust and support so that they can draw the stories out. However, finding the right style with which to express the stories to an audience is more complex. Facilitators have a responsibility to the participants to ensure that the audience will understand the stories and the intent that the participants have in telling them. In her journal, Lisa Sokoluk wrote about assisting a participant to dramatise a story: "I can't tell the difference between imposing my opinions on her work and using my dramatic knowledge to give form to what she seeks to express".[30] The latter is the goal of facilitation, but the line is very difficult to define. Sokoluk let the participant guide her in this. If the participant was enthusiastic about an idea then Sokoluk felt that it was supporting the participant's vision. If the participant rejected an idea or did not see how it could work it was not pursued.

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[30] Lisa Sokoluk. Project Journal. 24 November, 1987.

Many of the techniques and principles were carried on to the next two projects by Lisa Sokoluk, who was a member of the facilitation team in all three projects. Coaching of facilitators by participants was a technique that continued to be used because it focuses on the participants' expertise and knowledge. The team approach to facilitation was also carried on to the other projects because it gave the facilitators the option to work closely with individual participants and it provided support. In the next two projects the facilitators were very conscious of giving the participants greater control over the content and style of the production.

Chapter Three

The Youth Quest Theatre Project[31]

Fitting In

The Youth Quest Theatre Project that will be examined in this chapter was influenced by the experience of the facilitators in the Safe House Project, who felt that they had gained valuable experience in working with marginalized young people. The Safe House Project participants had had positive experiences and felt a great sense of personal and group accomplishment from creating and performing their own play. The social workers felt that the participants had gained confidence and increased their communication and cooperation skills. The audience reaction to the performances had been positive; those involved felt that the play had both built public awareness and connected with other street youth.

Following the performances of the Safe House and Friends production, Hidden Truths, in December of 1987, the student facilitators maintained contact with Safe House and continued to work with the residents on an informal basis. This group, made up of the student facilitators, some of the students who had assisted with the Safe House production, including myself, and any Safe House residents who wished to attend, continued to meet on a weekly basis to share stories, improvise and create new scenes. The social workers from Safe House did not attend these meetings and David Barnet was no longer involved. All the members of the group were women and much of the discussion and exploration revolved around women's issues and childhood experiences. Over the spring and summer they performed scenes from Hidden Truths and some new material they had developed at several different venues including the Edmonton Sexual Assault Centre, The Alberta Social Workers Convention, the Alternative Theatre Conference at the University of Alberta and The Edmonton Board of Health.

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[31] Youth Quest Theatre was the name chosen by the participants for the theatre group several months into the play development process.

This group established a model of working that endeavoured to equalize the roles of the facilitators and participants by operating as a collective, with everyone sharing the responsibility for developing new material and providing stories. The structure operated on the assumption that each group member had different but equally valuable skills and experiences to offer to the process. To function within this structure all members of the group had to be sensitive to and supportive of one another. This method of working promoted a high level of commitment from participants because they had responsibility for the project. The group had a lot of fun working together and the atmosphere was mutually supportive and open.

Some members, both facilitators and participants, felt that this structure created a positive and creative working environment where it was possible for everyone in the group to learn from one another. Others were frustrated and felt that the process was too unstructured and that neither the process nor the participants were moving forward.

By the fall of 1988 only two of the original participants wished to continue their involvement with drama. Lisa Sokoluk and I were interested in doing more work with young people. Another University of Alberta drama student, Mieko Ouchi, had expressed interest in working with us, although she had no experience in popular theatre.

Clint Cornish, a youth worker with the YMCA Job Generation and Youth Leadership Development Programs, decided that writing and producing a play would be a suitable project for the Youth Leadership Development program. He had almost no personal experience in theatre but felt that the young people in the program had interesting stories to tell and that many useful skills could be learned in the process of producing a play. When he contacted the University of Alberta Department of Drama to find a volunteer to assist with the project he was put in touch with the students who had facilitated the Safe House Project.

The resulting Youth Quest Theatre Project was sponsored by the YMCA Job Generation and Youth Leadership Development programs, which are designed to assist unemployed young adults to develop job skills. The programs are open to youth aged sixteen to twenty-four who have less than a grade twelve education. Job Generation offers career planning, self-esteem and life skills workshops, job search techniques, computer assisted learning, resume writing, placement in education or employment and a minimum of one year of follow-up support.[37] Young people who have successfully completed the Job Generation program may join Youth Leadership Development which offers further skill development and it also provides a support system and social group for young people who are rebuilding their lives. Volunteers from the community are recruited to lead workshops and projects which focus on leadership skills.

The proposal from Youth Leadership Development to do a theatre project was an excellent opportunity for the facilitators to continue working with young people. Lisa Sokoluk, Mieko Ouchi and I met with Cornish and agreed that interested participants from the Safe House Projects could be included in this project. The YMCA was willing to provide administrative support and funding to cover any production costs. The facilitators from the university would be responsible for leading drama sessions and assisting the participants to develop a production.

To meet the objectives of Youth Leadership Development the participants would take responsibility for organizing all aspects of the production, including publicity, finding performance space and building set, props and costumes. They would be expected to attend all meetings and demonstrate a strong commitment to the project. Cornish would be the project supervisor and act as liaison with the YMCA. He was to attend all rehearsals to keep track of the progress of the project and provide administrative assistance. He had a strong personal investment in the success of the project because it was the first time that Youth Leadership Development had sponsored a theatre project.

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[37] Employment Programs (Edmonton:YMCA Enterprise Centre, 1989).

In terms of the structure and conditions in place at the start of the process, the Youth Quest Project differed in a number of ways from the Safe House Project. The Safe House Project had complimented the participants' therapy and given them an opportunity to practise cooperative and communication skills. These benefits had evolved out of the process but were not the reason for its initiation. In contrast, the Youth Quest Project was sponsored by Youth Leadership Development because the staff felt that theatre was a way to implement their mandate to teach leadership skills. The Safe House Project had been initiated by the facilitators, whereas the Youth Quest Project was initiated by the Youth Leadership Development program.

As well, the structures of the two facilitation teams were different: in the Safe House Project the facilitators had worked with a university instructor acting as leader; the Youth Quest facilitators were all young women who wanted to collaborate on their own project outside the context of a university course. The student facilitators who had worked on the Safe House Project had developed approaches to facilitation that were strongly influenced by the ideas of David Barnet. Lisa Sokoluk, who facilitated all three projects, based her approach on complete respect for the participants and a commitment to allowing them to lead the process. Like Barnet, she believes that the role of the facilitator is to guide the process in response to the needs of the participants.

Whereas in the Safe House Project the social workers had played an important role in providing support to the participants and back-up for the facilitators, there were no social workers involved in the Youth Quest Project. Cornish, the youth worker from the YMCA, was experienced in leading job training and recreation programs for young adults but he was not trained as a counsellor.

Shortly after the initial meeting with Cornish, the facilitators had a meeting with the Job Generation Program director to discuss the project and get permission to start. At this time the YMCA administration did not express any concerns about the possible content of the production or the process as it was explained by the facilitators. The project was approved to begin immediately and the first meeting with the participants was held in September, 1988. The weekly sessions were held in a rehearsal hall on the University of Alberta campus because the YMCA could not provide a suitable space.

The young people who agreed to participate in the project ranged in age from seventeen to twenty-four. Cornish selected some of the participants for the project based on their record of commitment to other Job Generation Projects. The two young women who came from the Safe House Project had demonstrated commitment and enthusiasm in the work that had happened during the spring and summer. The participants took on the project with the expectation of developing a play to present to other young people.

The membership of the group was unstable for the first few meetings as some people dropped in to "check it out", but eventually settled to the seven young people who completed the project. The participants appeared to bond well from the start. The youth from the YMCA had gone through the Job Generation program together, had been involved with Youth Leadership Development for some time and were already a close-knit group but they accepted the two new members. The YMCA youth had a strong relationship with Cornish and respected him as a friend and a leader. The two young women from Safe House had a similar bond with Sokoluk from the Safe House Project.

The participants differed from the Safe House group; although they came from similar backgrounds, the Youth Quest group were further along in the process of regaining control of their lives. They had higher self-esteem than the Safe House participants and were better equipped to work cooperatively. As a group, the participants were more mature than the Safe House group and were comfortable working together.

The Youth Quest participants came from comparable backgrounds and had dealt with family violence and some of them had a history of substance abuse. Most had spent time living on the street. They had all dealt with the social services system and had strong feelings about how the system had failed them. They lived independently and were all focused on improving their situations by upgrading their education or finding permanent employment. They had many other commitments and responsibilities related to work or school and two of the women had young children.

Two of the participants in the group were male, which created a different dynamic than had existed in the work with Safe House; there was not the same level of openness in discussing personal issues, particularly those dealing with sexual abuse. David Barnet's presence in the Safe House Project had not had this same impact because the participants looked up to him as a sort of father figure; the young men in the Youth Quest Project were the young women's peers. There was a certain amount of showing off and flirting at first, which interfered with the work in exercises and improvisations, but it became less of a problem as the participants became friends and became comfortable working with each other.

As in the previous project, the facilitators adopted a team approach to leading the process. They hoped by modelling a cooperative working method where each member of the team brought different skills and strengths to the process that the participants would adopt the same approach. It was important that no facilitator be identified as the leader so that every member of the group would take equal responsibility for the project. The facilitators felt that the relationships which began to develop within the group were supportive and trusting. The fact that everyone involved in the project, both facilitators and participants, was close in age (between eighteen and twenty-five) encouraged this collective structure.

The facilitators felt strongly that the participants should have complete responsibility for the content and style of the production. They wanted to create an environment where the participants would take charge of the process so that the facilitators would become resources rather than leaders.

A key principle in the facilitation team's approach was that the content and style of the production would be the responsibility of the participants. The facilitators did not want to direct the theatrical content of the production. The role of the facilitators was to support the participants' choices and to assist them in putting their ideas into action. Mieko Ouchi, who had a background in acting and playwriting, found that it was difficult not to impose her ideas about style and structure onto the participants. She felt that, as a facilitator, her role was to open the participants' minds to theatrical possibilities and assist them to communicate clearly.[33] The facilitators led some improvisation games and exercises designed to teach the participants theatre skills but the majority of time was spent discussing and trying scene ideas that came from the participants.

The largely hands-off facilitation approach worked successfully with most of the participants, who were enthusiastic about developing their own production. However, one of the consequences of working in this way was that the facilitators did not drive the project forward and progress was slow. Collective decision making is a lengthy process.

Some of the young people dropped out early in the project because they felt that it was moving too slowly. One young man had joined the group because he wanted to learn to act and perform. He found the development of material was taking too much time.

The facilitators established a routine, similar to that of the Safe House Project, of meeting for several hours before each session to discuss the progress of the project and to talk about the coming session. The focus of the team meetings was on debriefing the previous session rather than carefully planning and running through the up-coming session. These meetings served as a chance for the facilitators to share ideas for exercises, discuss the direction of the process and monitor the progress of the project. Lisa Sokoluk was able to share the experience she had gained working on the Safe House Project. Cornish was involved in all these meetings as the administrator of the project. As in the Safe House Project the facilitators worked largely on instinct and were flexible in their approach. Unlike the Safe House Project there was not an experienced instructor leading the meetings and each facilitator had an equal role in making decisions. There was extensive discussion about perceptions of the process and ways to deal with specific individuals. The support of the team was very important because it gave the inexperienced facilitators confidence. They were able to solve problems as a group and share responsibility. The team meetings were time-consuming but they ensured that the facilitators were unified in their approach to the process.

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[33] Mieko Ouchi, Personal interview, 19 October, 1993.

The first phase of theatre sessions with the participants was designed to build the sense of group, develop improvisation skills and decide on the subject of the play and the type of audience. The sessions included improvisation exercises, some storytelling and trust and group building exercises.

One of the first steps in the process was to ask participants to establish the objectives for the performance because it was a requirement of the Youth Leadership training that participants set objectives for their projects. A list was made of topics that could be included in the play:

- drug abuse and why it happens
- self-confidence and lack of it
- verbal abuse and physical abuse
- lifestyles of alternative sets; abuse, drugs, panhandling, stealing
- trying to escape a past lifestyle, making people believe you have changed
- youth suicide
- friends can hold you back; in trust and support there has to be room for change
- running into old abusers and having to deal with them every day
- people put down and fear what they don't understand
- elder's misunderstanding
- dealing with peoples' attitudes while on social services
- cycle of abuse
- don't worry about the past, just get your shit together here and now.[34]

The group wanted to create a play that would help other young people by using theatre to share their experiences with others. They expressed a desire to perform the play at venues like Youth Emergency Shelter, the Youth Detention Centre, high schools and life skills classes. In developing material the young people tried to find ways to include all the issues that were discussed at this first meeting.

From the beginning of the process the group was willing to improvise scenes based on a story idea, an interaction between characters or a situation. For example, an improvisation would start from a suggestion that a group of friends is having a party at someone's house and the mother comes in drunk. The participants, and facilitators, if asked, would pick a character and then improvise the scene to see what would happen. When the improvisation ended the group would talk about it and decide if it might fit into the play. This differed from the Safe House Project where improvisations were based on the personal stories that had been collected.

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[34] Project notes recorded by facilitators, September. 1988.

The facilitators introduced some non-realistic improvisation exercises to the group that were based on movement or exploring different styles of presentation. Some work was done using human statues and living pictures to express ideas and attitudes. In another exercise the participants created public service commercials about issues facing young adults. The facilitators chose television formats for exercises because the participants could recognize and reproduce T.V. styles immediately. The goal of all these exercises was to introduce the participants to some non-realistic styles of presentation, some of which were integrated into the final production.

All of the participants were excited about the prospect of learning to act and performing. The young woman who had played Pierrot in Hidden Truths wanted to play a less hidden role in this performance. The Youth Quest group enjoyed improvising and quickly became comfortable performing for each other. As a "penalty" for arriving late at rehearsals any group member had to forfeit their break and act out why they were late for the session. This activity became so popular the participants would be late for rehearsal on purpose so they could plan their excuse story.

In the early sessions the entire group participated in improvisations set at parties and in classroom situations. Out of these improvisations the participants began to develop characters which they later decided to use as the central figures for the play. Facilitators participated in some improvisations and, as the play developed, took turns watching scenes and functioning as an outside eye to see if the story was clear.

One month into the play development process the group was invited to present some material at a meeting of Save the Children, Canada. The group spent a morning showing some of the scenes they were working on and talking about what it was like to create dramatic material based on their experiences. The response to the presentation was positive and it helped to build the group's confidence. Both the facilitators and the participants benefited from hearing that the material they were working on came across as honest and clear. They felt that they had the ability to complete the project successfully.

In the first phase of the project the drama sessions progressed steadily. The participants worked well together and were beginning to create material for the production. They were committed to creating a show to share their experience and knowledge with other young people. However, the facilitators had some concerns regarding the approach of their team.

At planning meetings early in the process much time was spent discussing the team approach to facilitation and learning about each other. The facilitators were concerned that, in rehearsal, Clint Cornish was assuming the role of intermediary between the facilitators and the participants. He had a tendency to repeat directions to the participants and monitored their behaviour by encouraging them to pay attention and follow instructions. The participants assumed that Cornish was "in charge" of the project and tended to turn to him for answers. This inhibited the participants from taking responsibility for the project and made it difficult for the other facilitators to build an open working relationship with them. The situation was similar to the problem with the social worker in the Safe House Project. Cornish was unaware that he had this impact. The participants from the YMCA programs were used to relating to him as the leader and so he naturally assumed that role. Once he was aware of this he made an effort to let the participants take responsibility for themselves.

The participants were familiar with working in a hierarchical structure where they were responsible for following instructions. In this process they were being asked to motivate the process themselves and to make a personal investment in the success of the project. It was difficult for them to accept that the facilitators were not there to tell them what to do. The project was challenging and risky but ultimately the participants came to feel that it was their personal achievement.

The participants were strongly focused on creating a play and were keen to spend the majority of time in sessions talking about the play and creating material. The set-up/group building phase and the material gathering phase ran together.

The material that began to develop was based in personal experience but the participants created characters rather than sharing personal stories. The participants told fictional stories about people like themselves rather than sharing actual events from their lives as the Safe House participants had done. The material was distanced from the actual experiences of the participants. Because the participants were most comfortable dealing with issues and situations they had faced in the past, all the stories were about younger people. There was a conscious decision on the part of the facilitators not to push the participants to share painful experiences or memories because there was no trained counsellor to deal with disclosures. The facilitators felt that they did not have the experience to manage any highly sensitive or emotional situations.

As the process progressed the group had become very close and began to tell personal stories. These stories were not used in the play but they helped to build the ensemble and they enriched the characters and scenes that had already been developed. Some of the monologues, written near the end of the process, strongly reflect personal experience.

After two months of weekly meetings a large collection of scenes had been developed. Facilitators kept records of all the scenes that were improvised. Some of the same characters appeared in more than one of the improvised scenes and most of the scenes involved high school age teens. The idea of setting the play in a high school was suggested and became the backdrop for the play.

The title of each scene was written on a card and the process of ordering the scenes began. The play was to follow the stories of seven central characters who attended the same high school. Each participant played one of these major characters.

The stories were intercut using the format of a television series with several different plot lines. The participants wanted the play to be realistic so that the audience would know that it was about things that really happen.

The facilitators, including Clint Cornish, were called on to play the smaller roles, most of which were adult authority figures (teachers, police and parents) and unsympathetic teenagers. The participants coached the facilitators in playing these characters so that they were consistent with the experience of the participants.

The process of selecting and reworking the scenes was slow because everything was done through improvisation and group discussion. It was at this point in the Safe House Project that the participants had decided that they were wasting time and had taken control of the project. A parallel event did not occur in the Youth Quest Project, where the participants were committed and felt ownership of the project from the start but were comfortable working slowly.

The original plan for the project had been to perform the play in December. At the beginning of December it was obvious that the play could not be ready before the end of the month without greatly increasing the weekly time commitment and putting pressure on the participants. The participants and the facilitators decided together that it would be best to put the performance off until January.

During the play development process, for the most part, the participants were able to work well together. There was very little apparent jealousy between participants who helped each other to create scenes. However, the young woman who had created the "Sisters of the Street" scene in the Safe House Project had some difficulty working with the other participants. She preferred to write material on her own and bring it to rehearsal in a finished form. She wrote two songs for the show and wrote complete scripts for her scenes. As in the Safe House Project, other participants felt that she was demanding special attention from the facilitators. She tended to remain on the outside of the group and concentrated on developing her scenes, showing little interest in the play as a whole. As the project neared performance and the participants began to feel anxious there were some personality clashes related to this. The project was extremely important to this young woman and she demanded a great deal of support from the facilitators. She was emotionally sensitive, and involvement in the theatre projects had built her self-confidence and self-esteem. The facilitators tried to encourage her to be more supportive of the other participants but she felt that if she participated in the development of other scenes she would be accused of trying to take over. The facilitators let her remain distanced from the group to avoid a major clash among the participants but they were concerned that she was not willing to work with the other participants.

The last phase of the play development process involved setting the final order of the scenes and rehearsing the play as a whole. The facilitators encouraged the participants to watch each other's scenes and suggest ways to make them clearer, however the facilitators found that the participants wanted their feedback as well. The facilitators limited their directorial input to adjustments in blocking and audibility and did not alter the actual structure of the scenes.

The facilitators did make a major dramaturgical choice to solve a problem with the ending of the play. All the stories were open-ended and the participants could not find a way to end the play. The facilitators suggested that each participant write a monologue for their character to conclude their storyline. The facilitators encouraged the participants to use the monologues to leave the audience with the message that they wanted to get across in the play. These monologues were added to the play in the last week of rehearsal.

The final week of rehearsals focused on the technical production of the play. The performances were held in a YMCA gymnasium which had to be converted into a theatre. Portable stage lights were borrowed from the university and two students offered to run them for the performance. A backdrop for the play was created using cardboard boxes that were spray painted to look like alley walls covered in graffiti. Music was chosen to play before the show and during scene changes. The participants took responsibility for making and distributing posters.

The play that developed was called Fitting In. It is about a group of young people who attend the same high school. Like the first play, it dramatises some of the situations that lead young people to run away from home and end up on the street. The performers hoped that the play would change people's attitudes towards street youth. They wanted to build an awareness that street youth are not criminals and are often escaping abuse and violence in their home environments. From the program of Fitting In:

> WHY?
>
> This play is fiction based on fact. All of the actors have lived or been exposed

> to all of the situations presented to you tonight.
>
> That's why we are here; we have survived to tell the tale.
>
> This production is our chance to help others understand their lives a bit better and also a chance to thank the people that helped us through our own.
>
> Fitting In is from our hearts and souls and this we leave with you.
>
> Here's hoping we all can make a difference to someone... some day.

The play dramatises events in the lives of seven teens who all face different problems associated with school, family life and social pressures.[35] Spike is unpopular because her parents force her to study all the time, but when she starts to use drugs she finds a close group of friends; she is eventually arrested for selling drugs in the school. Lee is physically abused by her mother and runs away from home; she is picked up by the police who persuade her to go to the Youth Emergency Shelter to get help. Cas, Lee's sister, uses drugs to block out the abuse in her home; she is arrested selling drugs with Spike. Jim faces extreme pressure from different cliques at school and is completely ignored by his parents at home; he drinks heavily and uses drugs to escape. Jackie is depressed and is not able to get the support she needs from her friends, whose answer to everything is to have another toke; when she discovers that she is pregnant she commits suicide. Denny is a pusher with an alcoholic mother; he persuades other students to work for him selling drugs in the school. Rachel is sexually abused by her stepfather; when she finds out she is pregnant her boyfriend refuses to accept any responsibility because the baby could be the stepfather's; she decides to keep the baby.

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[35] Description and quotes from Fitting In are drawn from a videotape of the performance, recorded at the Edmonton Westmount YMCA, 14 January, 1989.

The final part of the play is a series of monologues delivered by each of the central characters.

Lee is alone in lock-up. She talks about life on the street. She says because she is small she is always the target for attackers. She admits that she is frightened. She decides to go to the Youth Emergency Shelter and see if the counsellors can help her.

Jim is alone. He says he has lost Jackie and now Cas. His parents have left again and he has no one to talk to. He decides to work to finish school and maybe go to university. He laughs that maybe he could even be a doctor someday.

Cas is alone in her cell. She says she does not have a drug problem. "I can take them or leave them but I choose to take them. It's a lot better than reality." She says that being in lock-up will let her find out if she really can go without drugs.

Jackie comes forward and says, "I guess I really did need you. We were so busy getting high, we never, ever talked."

Spike is alone in jail. She wonders what it would be like to live on the street, sleeping in parkades, maybe getting mugged or raped. She does not want that to happen. She admits that she was wrong when she thought that she could make it alone. "Everyone needs someone."

Denny comes forward and speaks directly to the audience. "My name is Dennis Campbell and I used to be really into drugs. That's why I was playing the pusher in the play." Dennis goes on to say how much the Job Generation Program helped him. He thanks the audience for coming to the play.

Rachel delivers her monologue standing by a crib. She says she decided to keep her baby. "Every day I struggle to stop the cycle of abuse. We don't have to be victims any more. We all have a choice. We can take back control of our own lives and begin to live out our own dreams." Rachel begins to sing "Rock on Little Dreamer". The cast joins her for the last verse. The song expressed the hope for the future which all the performers shared.

Rock on, little dreamer for a brand new start
Rock on, little darling to that desire in your heart.

You started out so very young and free
And the beauty deep inside you, you could not see.
But I believe in you
No matter what you say or what you do.
Just say a prayer every day and God will tie our spirits together.

And the little girl on the other side of the spark
Was really me forming into my own heart.
And as the sun set upon the misty sea
So begins a new hope a new dream.

Just say a prayer every day

> And God will tie our spirits together
> Rock on little dreamer, in the spirit and the soul
> Rock on little darling we shall forever rock and
> roll.[36]

The style of the play is mainly that of television realism, a dramatic form familiar to the participants, but some less-realistic elements were incorporated. During the creation process the facilitators attempted to challenge the participants to try other styles by asking them if there were ways, other than realistic dialogue, to tell the story and reveal information about the characters. As a result, some of the improvisation exercises that were done early in the project were adapted for use in the play. For example, living sculptures were used to show fights and in the scene depicting Jackie's memorial service her ghost moved among the other students who were "frozen"; as Jackie passed by, they came to life and she could hear their thoughts and comments. This idea grew out of a living snap-shot storytelling exercise. As in Hidden Truths, the roles played by the facilitators were coached by the participants and tended to be caricatures because they were the young peoples' versions of teachers, rich kids, police and abusive parents. Because of their commitment to giving the participants control of the content of the show the facilitators used only the material that the participants gave them to create the characters.

Fitting In was performed in the gym at the Westmount YMCA on January 13 and 14, 1989. In the week before the play was to be presented several problems arose with the YMCA administration that almost resulted in the cancellation of the production. All the publicity had been sent out, there was substantial media interest in the project and the facilitators were anticipating large audiences when Clint Cornish was informed by the administration that there was to be no swearing or smoking in the play and that no one under sixteen would be admitted to the performances unless they were street kids. The YMCA did not want to be seen to be promoting the subculture that street youth represented. The YMCA administration had been concerned about the project from the beginning but up until this point Cornish was the only member of the project who had been aware of this. He had been successful in allaying their fears until the publicity for the show went out and the media showed interest.

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[36] Music and lyrics by Annahita Wilson. Copyright 1989.

In addition to censoring the play the YMCA was concerned about the lobby display that the participants had developed. The participants had spent a lot of time collecting information on shelters and youth support programs. They hoped that after the play and the post-show discussion, audience members would collect information about youth agencies. The Youth Emergency Shelter was in great financial need and the participants asked if they could collect donations from the audience. The YMCA refused to allow this because it might be seen as a political activity and they did not want to solicit funds for an agency that was not associated with the YMCA. After some argument the YMCA agreed to allow the pamphlets but they would not allow the collection.

The participants were extremely hurt and insulted by the attitude of the YMCA, which they had always experienced as a supportive organization. They were offended that the YMCA felt that the show would be appropriate for street kids but was not suitable for "normal" kids. The participants had made a great personal investment in the production and they had taken total ownership. The YMCA was effectively undermining the control and responsibility that the participants had achieved through doing the project.

The entire company--participants, facilitators and Clint Cornish--had a long meeting and decided that they would accept the YMCA requests to delete swearing and smoking. They refused to turn people away if they wanted to see the play but said that the YMCA could police the door if they wished. The participants were responsible for negotiating a compromise so that the play could go on.

The production went ahead as scheduled but the administration was extremely nervous. The restrictions that were placed on the production were reflected in the performance, particularly in the introduction to the play which the participants wrote just prior to the first performance:

> "Welcome Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for attending our production of Fitting In. Some of the scenes you will see will affect you all in different ways. Some of you will be disbelieving and horrified and others will be hurtled back through a time of very painful experiences. Some of us originally started writing and performing plays such as this in 1987 with a home called Safe House. This play was written by the actors and actresses with material drawn from their own true experiences. The Edmonton YMCA Youth Leadership Development Program would like to bring to you this account of what the life of the average street kid is like. This play is about what it is like before kids hit the street.
>
> I will let you watch the play but however I must warn you this play concerns scenes of violence and coarse language. Ironically what they call adult subject matter in theatre is what we as children try to cope with at home. The street was a much safer place for most of us to be. In producing this play our hope is to educate people and create a better understanding and acceptance of the many street kids of Canada and around the world. We hope that by exposing more people to the reality of our lives we will be able to encourage change in our society's views and response to kids in this position. Fasten your seat belts, our journey is about to begin."[37]

Before the participants' introduction to the show, two of the facilitators spoke briefly about the process of creating the play and they invited the audience to stay for a post-show discussion. This introduction was very similar to David Barnet's prior to Hidden Truths and served to invite the audience to be part of the performers' process. The facilitators felt that it was appropriate for them to set the context for the performance.

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[37] Fitting In, videotape recorded at the Edmonton, Westmount YMCA, 14 January, 1989.

Immediately following the performance a facilitator came forward to ask for people's comments or questions. Audience members thanked the cast for sharing their experiences. Ironically, several people suggested that the play should be shown in schools because it dealt so honestly with the problems that young people face.

The audience for Fitting In was similar to the audience of Hidden Truths, made up largely of friends and family of the participants, students and instructors from the University Drama Department and some social service workers, but there were no groups of young people from other agencies. Some parents tried to bring their children to the performance after seeing the television coverage but most of them were turned away at the door by the YMCA.

The participants were very charged by the performance and felt a great sense of personal accomplishment. The restrictions placed on the show made the young people feel that they were doing something that had real impact because it made the YMCA so nervous. After the performance the YMCA administration did not give the performers any feedback.

Fitting In was not sophisticated. The performance was rough and many of the scenes were fragments rather than well developed scenes, but the passion and commitment of the participants made the performance engaging and affecting.

At the conclusion of the Youth Quest Theatre Project certain guidelines for facilitating projects with young adults were becoming clear to the facilitators. They believed that it was important to give ownership of the project to the participants, create a cooperative and supportive working environment and find ways for participants to tell their stories clearly. They felt that the process should give the participants the freedom to learn and discover new ideas, and explore and use the stories and presentation forms that they already know. Achievement of this in a project depends on the ability of facilitators to support and guide participants without taking control. Facilitators must be flexible and sensitive to respond to the needs of participants and the process.

The facilitators of the YMCA project felt they had been successful in most of these areas. The participants had taken ownership and control of the project and consequently felt very proud and fulfilled by their accomplishment. The project had a strong cooperative working structure which most of the participants had embraced fully. The facilitators and participants had created an environment of support and trust.

The facilitators had been less successful in assisting the participants in presenting their stories clearly. The scenes in Fitting In were sometimes difficult to follow. There were two reasons for this: first, the participants had control of the style and content of the scenes without having the skills to give them a solid dramatic structure; and, second, the facilitators did not have the directorial experience to adjust existing scenes to make them more effective.

The facilitators were interested in continuing to develop their skills and gain experience. They felt that the team approach to facilitation was very successful because of the support and inspiration it offered. They were disheartened by the response of the YMCA and wanted to avoid a similar situation in the future. They felt that the process was positive and worthwhile for the participants and wanted to continue to explore the facilitation process.

Chapter Four

Transitional Allies[38]

Letting Go and Taking Control

At the conclusion of the Youth Quest Project the facilitators were interested in continuing to work with young adults and one of the students who had helped with lighting for the Youth Quest show was interested in working with them. They wanted to expand their skills and work on a project that would not be subject to an agency agenda. The project participants were committed to doing more theatre and the facilitators wanted to do more work with them.

In planning meetings during the Youth Quest Project, the facilitators had discussed benefits that the participants were deriving from the process and had identified areas for further development. They felt that some participants had built strong cooperative working skills while others had focused solely on their own work. They felt that participants could be challenged to articulate solutions to the problems that they were presenting in their scenes and that the participants would learn by looking beyond their own experiences for scene material. The facilitators were keen to initiate a project that would push participants in these areas.

Based on their belief in the value of popular theatre, the facilitators were in the process of forming their own theatre company with a mandate to work with community groups using theatre to explore and analyse their concerns and issues and to articulate solutions.[39] Facilitators Lisa Sokoluk, Mieko Ouchi and myself and Elinor Holt, who had offered technical support on the YMCA project, formed Concrete Theatre in 1989. We planned to continue working with marginalized groups to create plays.

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[38] Transitional Allies is the name that the participants chose for the name of the company in the Health Centre Project.

Like the facilitators, the participants from the Youth Quest Project were keen to continue their involvement with theatre. They had enjoyed the "high" of performance and had received positive feedback from the audience and the facilitators for their courage and commitment to the project. They felt that through the project they had built awareness of issues that were important to them. However, they felt strongly that they had been censored by the YMCA and that the show had not been as honest and realistic as it could have been had they had more freedom. Because the YMCA administration had stopped young people from seeing the show, the participants had not been able to reach teenagers, who needed to hear their message. There was a strong feeling among the participants that not everyone had shared an equal commitment to the project. They wanted to do another project that would address some of these issues. The participants kept in contact with each other and with the facilitators, hoping that another theatre project would start.

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[39] Concrete Theatre Society Bylaws, incorporated December 1989.

In the spring of 1989, about fifteen months after the Youth Quest performance, Concrete Theatre was approached by the Edmonton Board of Health to develop a play for performance at the Southside Health Centre during the Fringe Theatre Festival.[40] The Edmonton Board of Health was offering performance space, production costs, promotion and an honorarium for each performance. It wanted to sponsor productions that dealt with issues of wellness on a personal and societal level and raise the profile of the Edmonton Board of Health as a health promotion agency. Shortly after the Board of Health first approached Concrete Theatre about the project, they hired Lisa Sokoluk to coordinate the festival.

The facilitators, now Concrete Theatre, felt that the proposal to participate in the festival would address the needs of the participants to work in an environment where they could really take control of the project.

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[40] The Edmonton Board of Health and Edmonton Social Services distributed a proposal to various theatre groups to develop theatre which dealt with health and social issues, for performance during the 1989 Fringe Theatre Festival. The objectives of the project as outlined in the initial proposal were as follows: 1. to facilitate the public expression of a health/social message through drama/popular education; 2. to support the exposure of community volunteer groups and their capacity to instruct the public at large in important issues; 3. to enhance, maintain and sustain the collaborative efforts of health and social agencies and community groups; 4. to provide the professional expertise relevant to the issues dramatized to respond to any follow-up request by the audience following the viewing of the production; 5. to enhance the public's understanding of the Edmonton Board of Health and Edmonton Social Services.

The starting conditions of the Health Centre Project differed from those of the two previous projects. In both the Safe House and the Youth Quest Projects the agencies that supported them, Safe House and the YMCA Youth Leadership Development Program, were primarily interested in the therapeutic benefit and skill development of the participants. The Edmonton Board of Health was interested in presenting a festival of popular theatre plays that would support their health promotion initiative. They did not intend to have any involvement in the process of creating the plays. As in the Youth Quest Project there would be no social worker involved with the project who could handle problems or crises that might arise.

The new facilitator, Elinor Holt, had been a student at the University of Alberta; she had studied with David Barnet, she knew the other facilitators well and she shared their commitment to popular theatre. They were confident working together and felt that they understood the process and could respond to the needs of the participants. They felt that this new project would provide an opportunity to push the participants, whom they knew well, to challenge themselves, to articulate solutions and look to outside resources for material. The facilitators were determined to set high expectations for the participants in this project and to push them to create a more theatrical show. They felt that this was possible because the participants all had experience, had demonstrated commitment and enthusiasm and had developed a common language and working method.

The facilitators determined that the project would be "professional", meaning that the participants would be expected to commit to developing a meaningful production. They would be creating a show for a mixed Fringe Theatre Festival audience and they would receive an honorarium for their work. The group agreed to split this honorarium equally between all members, both participants and facilitators.

In order to accommodate summer schedules, the time frame of the project was only two months. This was considerably shorter than the previous projects, which had taken four to five months. The process needed to be focused and efficient.

The facilitators were keen to establish a collective working environment where all members of the group shared responsibility for all elements of the play content, development and performance. The facilitators aimed to create a collective structure similar to that of the group that had developed in the months between the performances of the Safe House Project and the start of the Youth Quest Project. They hoped that a collective structure of this sort would allow both the participants and the facilitators to explore issues in more depth and to challenge each other. Each member of the group would contribute their special skills, and the facilitators would become resources for theatre skills rather than leaders of the process.

Another factor which influenced this project was that it was to be the first production for the newly formed Concrete Theatre. The facilitators wanted the project to reflect work that was positive, ethical and worthwhile for the participants and meaningful for the audience. They were more conscious of having their work evaluated and hoped that it might lead to other projects. While this did not have a direct impact on the process, the facilitators had a higher personal and professional stake in this project.

Initially all of the participants from the Youth Quest Project expressed interest in the new project. However, due to scheduling conflicts only four of them were free to participate in July and August. The group was very small and so, with concurrence from the participants, the facilitators invited Angel[41] to join the group. She was friendly with some of the group members and had seen the Youth Quest show. She was very enthusiastic about working on a theatre project and had been asking to get involved for several months. She wanted to perform and said she had a lot of important things to say.

At the beginning of the project there were nine young women in the group, five participants and four facilitators. The fact that the group was all women created a safe and open environment. Because the number of participants and facilitators was almost equal, there was no sense that one person was in charge of the group. Although the members of the group came from different backgrounds they could relate to each other on the basis of shared experience as young Canadian women. Through the work on other projects the facilitators had gained a sensitivity to the concerns of the participants. With the exceptions of Angel and Elinor Holt everyone had worked together before and had developed working relationships.

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[41] Angel is the street name used by this young woman.

The first meeting was held at the University of Alberta in July, 1989.[42] The meeting began with an explanation of the mandate of Concrete Theatre and a discussion of the expectations for the Health Centre Project. The group developed a contract for the process which outlined that all group members would: attend all rehearsals; focus on the project in rehearsal; create a play which addressed issues affecting womens' health and well-being; receive an honorarium for their work on the project; and pay for babysitting for the group members who had children. The participants and the facilitators all agreed verbally to the conditions of this contract.

The facilitators outlined the concept of collective creation. They intended to be very open about the process and the structure of the group, although the participants had worked with a collective play development process before, it had never been named or defined. In this project everyone, facilitators and participants, would have input into the content of the production. Everyone would bring their skills, stories and talents to the process. Everyone would be involved in making decisions that affected the project and everyone had a responsibility to make sure that all opinions were heard.

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[42] The description of the rehearsal process is drawn from rehearsal notes kept by the facilitators, July and August 1989.

As in the other projects the facilitators met before each session to discuss and monitor the progress of the project. The facilitators had two major concerns in this project; one, to ensure that the group members were supporting each other; and two, to challenge the participants without imposing on them. The facilitators did not define themselves as the leaders of the project although they actively guided the process to ensure that the play would be ready for performance. They felt that if they established a creative environment by leading warm-up games, teaching some improvisation skills and asking questions to generate material and keep the process moving forward, the participants would take responsibility for creating the play.

Because the development period for the play was extremely short, the group spent the majority of time at the first session discussing content and scene ideas. The participants were interested in looking at concerns that affect women generally rather than focusing on their personal experiences.

They felt this would be interesting and would fit with the mandate of the Health Centre.

The ideas discussed were: AIDS, abuse, sexism in the education system, children's rights, self-esteem, relationship addiction and eating disorders. There was a discussion about the possible format for the show and everyone agreed that they would like to do a collage of scenes so that they could deal with many different topics. The participants felt that using a story format like the one used for Fitting In would restrict the variety of issues that could be explored. Everyone was asked to bring in material in the form of news items, books, stories or poetry for the next rehearsal. The group was enthusiastic about working together again and developing new material. They were very excited about performing at the Fringe Festival.

At the next meeting one participant brought in a book about relationship addiction called Women Who Love Too Much, by Robin Norwood. She wanted to explore relationship addiction and forgiveness as a way to break the bonds with an abuser and move forward. She was working on this process with her therapist and she wanted to include it in the play. She also wanted to explore the issues of sexual exploitation and pornography.

Angel became agitated when these issues were discussed and left the room. When she returned, she said it was too hard for her to think about those things because she had so many painful memories. The facilitators told Angel and the rest of the group that if they were uncomfortable they should say so or leave the room if they needed some time alone to think. By establishing ways to immediately deal with painful or emotional memories--talking and time out--the facilitators hoped to provide the participants with enough support.

Another participant brought in a newspaper article about sexual assault charges laid against a Catholic priest. She wanted to explore how people abuse positions of power. All the members of the group wanted to explore eating disorders and body image, which they identified as a major health issue for young women. Everyone in the group had stories about their own experiences with these issues and one of the participants had brought in some information and statistics about anorexia and bulimia in Canada. All the ideas for scene material dealt with identifying a problem but also with coping with and solving problems.

After the discussion there were several games and exercises including a vocal and physical warm-up and some mirroring exercises. Then the group made living photographs or sculptures to illustrate some of the issues that had been discussed. These images became the starting point for developing scenes.

The sessions in this project were very focused and a lot of work was accomplished each week. The members of the group were highly motivated and brought many ideas into rehearsals.

Every session included warm-ups and exercises to introduce non-realistic theatrical styles. As scenes began to develop the techniques explored in exercises were drawn on as different ways to present the material. The idea was to build up the participants' repertoire of presentation styles to use in dramatising material.

This method fed into the experience of the participants and gave them more ideas to draw on. The facilitators felt that they were not imposing these new ideas because it was up to the participants to integrate the ideas when they started to develop scenes. However, the facilitators did encourage the participants to use different styles by asking them to find alternative ways to tell every story. Some of the non-realistic styles that were used in the show included personifying objects, mirroring and sound collages.

Through the process the entire group worked together to develop each scene. Each scene was "owned" by the entire group rather than by the individual who had presented the original idea. To emphasize this collective ownership everyone was encouraged to pass their story or idea on to another person to perform, thus ensuring that the group members supported each other and that no single member became the "star" of the show. The facilitators encouraged the participants to direct each other and to make decisions collectively.

There were two incidents, which happened early in the process, that had a profound effect on the facilitators and the dynamics in the group. The first occurred at the end of the second session. One of the participants wanted to talk more about the structure of the group and Concrete Theatre. She felt betrayed and deserted because she was not asked to be part of Concrete Theatre, although she had been involved in every project. She accused the facilitators of discriminating against the participants because of the differences in education. She felt that she had been left out of the company because she was not considered smart enough or good enough to help other people to do projects. She believed that she had as much experience as the facilitators because she had done all three projects. Angel completely supported her position but the other two participants who were in attendance did not feel the same.

The facilitators said that they did not intend to desert any of the participants and would always be there to support any projects that they wanted to do. They also explained that they wanted to make facilitating theatre projects their work. They had formed Concrete Theatre so that they could work with many different groups.

The facilitators were concerned that the participants might view them as exploitative or elitist. They had no intention of taking advantage of the participants. The group talked about the discrimination issue and the facilitators said that they did not feel that they were superior to the other members of the group, just different. The hope was that through the theatre process everyone would learn from each other because each individual brought different skills and experiences to the process. The young woman who had brought up the issue agreed that she would accept the facilitators' rationale even though she still felt that she had been unjustly excluded from Concrete Theatre. She was willing to accept the structure of the group in order to continue working on the play.

This conflict made the facilitators aware of several issues related to their working relationship with the participants. It was the first time in any of the projects that issues of class had been discussed with the group. It made the facilitators much more aware that their life experience was outside the community of the participants. The facilitators were trying to create a collective with university educated theatre practitioners and members of a marginalized community. They were committed to giving each group member an equal position and to taking group ownership of the project. However, in order to achieve this the facilitators were carefully planning each session, discussing the participants and guiding the process.

Although all members of the group were seen as equal in the context of the project, this was not the case beyond the project. The facilitators had excluded the participants from the formation of the theatre company and had then asked them to work in an equal partnership on the Health Centre Project. The collective structure which the facilitators wanted to create was undermined because all the members of the group were not from the same community and the facilitators clearly retained their status as leaders by forming the theatre company. The trust and support within the group was affected by this conflict. The play development process continued to operate collectively but the roles of the facilitators and participants were re-defined and were more open.

The second incident which affected the process involved Angel, the young woman who was new to the project. The facilitators were put in a situation that they were not equipped to deal with.

One of the group members was not attending sessions because she said that someone else in the group, whom she refused to name, was threatening her and she did not feel safe. The facilitators decided to wait and see how serious the situation was before they took any action. Over the next two weeks it was revealed that Angel had threatened to kill this young woman. The facilitators spoke to both women separately and said that they would have to solve their differences peaceably or neither of them would be allowed to participate in the project. It was made clear that the ability to work cooperatively was a prerequisite for participating in a collective theatre project and violence was not an appropriate response to a disagreement. The facilitators were never clear on exactly what had happened between the two women to create the situation.

At the next meeting, the problem was still not resolved. Angel attended the meeting but the other young woman did not. Everyone except Angel had brought in research material and had thought about more scene ideas. Angel withdrew from the rest of the group and would not participate in exercises or improvisations but she was vocal in discussions. She found the issues too hard to deal with. The other members of the group were intimidated by her.

After the session the facilitators spoke to Angel again but she still refused to speak to the other woman, who was willing to meet and solve the problem. Over the following week the facilitators made a decision to ask Angel to leave the group because she was not able to work cooperatively or to meet the expectations of the project. The facilitators were very concerned about her history of violence[43] and did not feel that they had the skills to help her to deal with her emotional problems. The facilitators checked with the other participants who all agreed that Angel should be asked to leave.

Asking Angel to leave the group precipitated a series of late night phone calls to all the facilitators. Angel was extremely angry. She said would not leave the group and there was no way that she would stay away. She attended the next session but did not participate in any of the activities.

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[43] Angel had been charged with assault in the past and she carried a knife. She exhibited a violent temper at rehearsals.

She continued to phone the facilitators. In one conversation, when she was very stoned, she threatened to kill herself if she was forced to leave. The facilitators contacted the social workers from Safe House who knew Angel. They believed the best course of action was to remove Angel from the group and call the police if she continued to attend sessions; however, the facilitators were very uncomfortable with the thought of taking such drastic action. Eventually, Angel's psychologist was contacted and she agreed that Angel was not ready to work in a group situation. The psychologist discussed leaving the group with Angel who finally accepted the decision. The other woman returned to rehearsals and the project continued.

Angel composed a monologue which she recited to one of the facilitators over the phone and asked that it be included in the play. She attended all the performances at the health centre and was very supportive of the production. Angel had desperately wanted to be part of the project but she did not have the stability and cooperative working skills to participate.

In this situation with Angel the facilitators found themselves dealing with a problem that they were not really equipped to handle. In the Safe House Project the social workers were always present and removed anyone who was not able to function in the group and talked her through the problem. The social workers were trained to identify problem behaviours and debrief situations. In a context such as the Safe House Project, where all the participants were developing cooperative working skills, Angel might have been able to participate. However, the Health Centre project was not suitable for her. The other participants were relatively stable, had developed their own coping skills and did not need as much support. The young women were comfortable working as a group. They were able to talk about difficult and painful experiences with a critical distance. Angel was not equipped to function in this kind of situation.

Both the conflict over Concrete Theatre and the problem with Angel put a strain on the dynamics within the group. They continued to work together to develop the play but the facilitators were aware that their role in the collective structure had changed and there was a clearer line between facilitators and participants. In some ways the crisis with Angel helped to defuse the tension over Concrete Theatre and pulled the group together.

While these problems were going on, the group members continued to work on the play, bringing in ideas for scenes and doing improvisations based on their ideas. The group was aware that they had to keep working or the play would not be ready for the festival.

Almost all the material that was brought into rehearsals was integrated into the play. Four central issues were addressed: eating disorders and body image, relationship addiction, the cycle of abuse and teen pregnancy. Each issue was of particular concern to one of the participants, but everyone, including the facilitators, had input into each section. Unlike the previous projects, the facilitators shared their stories and attitudes about how the issues had affected their lives. All the material in the project belonged to everyone and each participant had an equal share in every scene. The woman who had written songs for the previous plays wanted to do so again but the facilitators said any song would have to involve everyone in the group. She decided not to include her songs in the show. The two songs that were in the play were written by one of the facilitators and everyone helped to perform them.

The production which developed out of this process was much more humorous than the previous projects. This may have been partly in reaction to the tension in the rehearsals. It was also because the play was developed to appeal to a wide audience. One of the participants who had done all three projects said that it was very freeing to learn to laugh at herself. The play focused much more on solutions to problems than the earlier projects. This was a reflection of the participants' focus on becoming active, successful individuals rather that victims of the system.

The participants decided to call themselves Transitional

Allies because they were moving forward to a new stage in their lives. They called the play Letting Go and Taking Control because they felt that it was about leaving their old lives behind and taking control of the future.

The play developed very quickly and, unlike the previous projects, the material was put in order and rehearsed as it was created. There was no time to separate the development of the play and the rehearsal.

The group did not have to take any responsibility for the major technical production of the show or the publicity. Lisa Sokoluk, in the her role with the Board of Health, set up the performance space in the Southside Health Centre, distributed posters and made the program. Everyone in the group shared responsibility for finding small props and costumes.

Letting Go and Taking Control[44] had three performances at the Southside Health Centre for audiences comprised of health care and social service workers who had heard about the play through the Edmonton Board of Health and curious Fringe-goers.

The play was performed in a large room with a small stage area at one end. There were black flats set up to create a backdrop and a backstage. There were no stage lights. The only set pieces were a table, chairs from the Health Centre and a large green garbage can labelled "society".

The play began with a welcome to the audience and a brief introduction explaining the process of developing the play. This introduction was given by one of the participants rather than a facilitator. It reiterated the program notes:

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[44] The synopsis of Letting Go and Taking Control is based on a videotape made at the Southside Health Centre, August 1989.

> The social system often encourages dependency. This show is about people taking control of their own lives. This project is about people recognizing the larger social causes behind their personal problems, and speaking out for themselves.

The opening song, sung by the whole group, is an ode to binging, sung to the tune of "The Twelve Days of Christmas". The scenes about eating disorders included poetry about control and comic images such as a fridge that taunts a character into over-eating and a grotesque mirror created by three actors that depicts a character's distorted body image. The section also includes facts and statistics about eating disorders and personal accounts of dealing with anorexia:

> A couple of years ago I got sick enough to end up in hospital. At that time I didn't realize I had a serious problem. I rapidly lost weight in a period of two months. I not only lost weight, I lost a sense of my true self. I got so obsessed with losing weight, I didn't stop to look at what I was doing to my body. I kept thinking a little more off won't hurt. I didn't realize I was hurting myself. It wasn't until I passed out at school that I realized I had a problem you could die from. At the current time I am struggling with an eating disorder: mentally or subconsciously not letting myself keep food down. I know I have a problem and I am getting help. Please, if you know someone or you, yourself have an eating disorder, get help.

The final part of the eating disorder unit is "The

Bulimia Song". The song is performed by one of the facilitators with the rest of the company repeating the last line of every verse. The chorus dance and display varieties of junk food in the background.

The day I first knew that I had to be slim
Was on the same day I was dumped by him.
I went down to the kitchen to grab me a bite
And when I bent over, my brother did sight.
"Your ass is as big as a full harvest moon.
Your legs are all dimpled with cellulite too.
Your stomach is swollen and pushed out so far,
My God, you're no woman you're an econo-car."

So from that day forward I made up my mind.
I'd lose fifty pounds and trim up my behind.
My methods were torturous and often times crude.
I binged myself, purged myself, weighed myself nude.

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OK, I'm no Cher or Kim Basinger clone,
But I have a shape and a flare all my own.
So stuff all those standards, stuff skinny or fat
Your black/white mentality's not where it's at.

If there is no winner, then no one will lose.
If everything's perfect, there's much more to chose.

Let me tell you good people, I'm glad that he's gone.
I'm happy, I'm healthy, I sing a new song.
I've written new rules, and I've got a new creed,
I'm not built for comfort, I am built for speed.

The next scene, called "Driving to Edson", is presented with the woman who had actually had the experience narrating the story, while the events are acted out by two other performers. The story is told in third person narrative with the narrator inviting the audience to listen in on sections of the dialogue. The scene is about a young woman who is
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mistaken for a man when she is hitch-hiking to Edson. The man who picks her up tells crude jokes and sexist stories and the young woman is forced to play along because she is frightened of what might happen if she reveals her gender. When they arrive in Edson the young woman jumps out of the car and reveals that she is female. The man speeds away.

The next scene is about teen pregnancy and looks at the pressures that society puts on a young woman who is pregnant. The first part is highly critical of a home for unwed mothers. A young woman is writing to her boyfriend to tell him that she is going to run away from the home because the other girls are abusing her and no one cares. In the next part of the scene the young woman is in labour. She is surrounded by a chorus of actors who voice the opinions of different segments of society: "How do you expect to take care of a kid when you can't take care of yourself?"; "Hey, when you gonna pop?"; "There are hundreds of couples out there who are capable of taking care of that child." These comments reflect the pressure from friends, family and society on a young woman trying to make a decision about keeping her baby. The woman screams and the chorus moves off as another performer comes forward to recite a poem.

> All my life I have endured pain of some kind
> A new life within me. I leave my past behind.
> Only God knows what the future will bring.
> One more pain to my recovery,
> One more pain to my serenity
> One more pain in this celebration of life.

The other woman sits up cradling a baby. "It doesn't matter anyway. I still love you."

The next scene is about relationship addiction and the cycle of abuse. The first part of the scene is about a mother and daughter, both caught in abusive relationships. The daughter tries to persuade her mother to accompany her to a women's shelter. The mother is unable to break away but the daughter leaves her abusive relationship. Another woman sits at the side watching the scene and then reads from her journal:

> Over the years of my childhood, my exposure to emotional and physical abuse instilled in me an attraction to abusive relationships. Between my thighs I have an open wound from getting hurt and exploited by men. That is why I must live in a temporary shell for the wound to form a healing scab; a healing scab of self-nurturing, unconditional love and hope. If I get involved with a man before the fresh skin forms beneath the scab, the scab will break apart, bleeding and I will interpret the pain as love. The abusive love I have always known. If I allow the scab to grow fresh skin underneath, the longer the time spent celibate the stronger the skin. Then each new skin cell can breathe life into my womanhood, my motherhood and my integrity. Then I can take a new path to learning what love is, because I know so well what love is not.

She finishes reading and puts her journal down. There is a knock at the door and a friend enters to invite her to come to a male strip club. She chooses to stay at home and take time for herself.

In the final section of the show the central character from each section of the play addresses the audience with a statement encapsulating the theme of one of the preceding scenes. After speaking, the performer throws a symbolic object into the garbage can centre stage. These statements were personal and reflected the issues that each young woman was wrestling with in their lives. "Starving in hope of looking like a model is garbage." "Having to look and act like a man to be safe is garbage." "Being forced to give up my son without any say, that's garbage." "We abused women must never underestimate our power and ability because I was dependant on an abusive husband for survival and that's garbage." Then Lisa Sokoluk comes forward and reads the monologue that Angel wanted to have in the play even though she had not been involved in the whole project.

> Angel is a member of our group who unfortunately could not perform with us this time. This is her piece.
>
> This is an ignorant society. I was on the bus the other day, it pulled up to a stop and this really obese woman was waiting to get on. The driver opened the door and she kind of got one step up, and then she got stuck. She couldn't fit on the bus. She apologised to the driver and backed out and off the bus. Well, as soon as the doors closed on her the whole bus burst out laughing. They just assumed that she had no control over looking that way, that she just has no will power or can't hold the food... They totally struck her down in her shoes, and maybe it wasn't her fault. Maybe she has a hormonal problem. I can understand kids laughing, kids don't know any better, maybe they've never seen someone...but adults?
>
> Or like, I can't read. I gotta live with it. Some people think it's a total joke. I don't. It's something I gotta live with. This is an ignorant society.

> Society isn't real, it's fiction. It's what they want us to see. It's one great big soap opera, and it's something I don't want no part of. People will sit back and laugh at other people's problems, but won't admit their own. Society has to learn that some things people do are stupid and should be laughed at, and in some things people can't help the way they are. When they learn to tell the difference then maybe I'll accept society.
>
> It's like the serenity prayer from AA - grant me the serenity to accept the things that I can't change and the courage to change the things I can. I can't change society but I'm trying to change the things I can in me. And I gotta admit they're not changing very fast, but at least I'm giving it a shot. Society has to learn to change their attitude. And they can. They just don't want to make the effort.
>
> And I can accept all the handicaps, all the people with problems like that, but I can't accept the half world of complete assholes. But then how can I accept myself 'cause I've started to realize that I've been one of those people and lots of my character still reflects that.
>
> But the world's ignorant enough all ready - I don't want to join them. Let them destroy themselves.
>
> Yeah you can use that in the play. I'm just telling it like it is - I only wish it was changed.

When she finishes reading, she crosses to the garbage can, pulls off the society sign and throws it into the garbage.

Following the performance the company gathered on stage and invited any questions or comments from the audience. The audience response was positive and once again a number of people commented on the courage it took to share the personal stories. The environment of the Fringe Festival did not promote discussion after the play because people had to leave the Health Centre quickly to see other productions. Many people who came to see Letting Go and Taking Control did not come to the performance with the expectation of seeing a popular theatre piece and were not prepared for a discussion after the show. As a result, the performers did not get the same level of positive feedback from the audience they had received for the previous shows.

Letting Go and Taking Control was quite rough in performance because of the limited rehearsal time but it included some strong statements from the participants, who were very committed to getting their messages across to the audience. In some ways the play was more openly political than the previous ones.

Whereas in the other productions the facilitators had tended to play the roles that the participants did not feel comfortable playing, this was not the case in Letting Go and Taking Control; the participants played parents and for the first time one of the women played a man. With the exception of the facilitator who sang the lead vocal in "The Bulimia Song", the facilitators were only in the group scenes and did not play specific characters.

The facilitators felt that this project had been a success in terms of creating a play which looked critically at major issues but they had discovered contradictions in their approach. They had to acknowledge that they were leading the participants and that they were not working in a completely equal collective. However, in practice the project had functioned as the facilitators had intended with everyone collaborating to create the play.

At a wrap-up meeting for the project the group talked about how Letting Go and Taking Control compared to the YMCA project.[45] All the participants thought it was better because it was "more real". The performance incorporated more non-realistic elements but the participants felt that they had been more honest because they had not felt restricted. One woman who had participated in all three projects liked the chance to do material and to look at situations that she was facing now rather than focusing on the past. She felt that this project had looked at solutions, not just problems. Everyone liked working in a small group and felt that working with all women made it easier to talk about subjects such as eating disorders and pregnancy. The group all felt they would like to have done more comic material.

All three productions were basically improvised but Letting Go and Taking Control was less set because of the short rehearsal time. The participants talked about improvising scenes in performance and all of them felt that not having a set script made the material seem more important and personal. They felt that by improvising, they thought about what they were saying and did not worry about remembering the exact words.

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[45] From notes recorded by Mieko Ouchi, wrap-up meeting held 19 September, 1989.

One of the participants who had taken part in all three projects said that the projects reflected her recovery process, moving from recognizing that she had been a victim to taking control of her future. "Being who I am on stage gives me courage and self-esteem."[46]

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[46] Annahita Wilson, Personal interview, 12 September 1991.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The three projects examined in this thesis are similar in many ways but the facilitation approach to each was slightly different. Analysis and comparison of these approaches reveal some of the contradictions inherent in facilitating collective popular theatre projects. In this conclusion, I will define the differences between the projects, discuss the questions and contradictions that arose out of the group structures and facilitation and, finally, propose some guidelines for facilitation that can be drawn from comparison of the three projects.

In many respects the Safe House and Friends Project was the most risky of the three projects because of the volatility of the participants and the inexperience of the facilitators in working with high risk youth. However, of the three projects it had the most support, given the involvement of social workers and David Barnet's experience in popular and collective theatre. There are two major considerations for facilitators that arose out of this project: first, the impact of involving trained social workers or counsellors in the process and, second, the amount of responsibility the facilitators have for the theatrical form and style of the production.

The Youth Quest Project was sponsored by an agency with a specific agenda. The YMCA administration had anticipated that the final show would promote their youth employment programming and was uncomfortable with the content of the show, which they felt promoted street youth sub-culture. The YMCA saw a theatre project as an innovative and effective way to teach leadership skills but they did not have a clear understanding of the facilitators' objective of empowering the participants by encouraging them to take control and responsibility for the style and content of the show. The elements of this project that distinguished it from the other projects were the involvement of the agency, the mixed gender participant group and the commitment of the facilitators not to impose theatrical style choices on the participants. Two factors influencing facilitation that arose out of this project: the need to establish a clear understanding of project goals and objectives with a sponsoring agency and, second (which first arose in the Safe House and Friends Project), the question of the level of influence facilitators have on the aesthetics of the performance.

The Transitional Allies Project was sponsored by the Edmonton Board of Health, which commissioned Concrete Theatre to develop a play suitable for their popular theatre festival at the Edmonton Fringe Festival. The project differed from the others in two ways; first, the health promotion mandate of the Board of Health placed parameters on the content of the production and, second, the facilitators set objectives for the process to address what they perceived to be the specific needs of the participants. The facilitators were committed to creating a collective structure with all members of the group, participants and facilitators, sharing responsibility for every aspect of the project. Attempting to create a collective working structure with facilitators and participants from very different communities created contradictions that were major issues in this project. These contradictions and the question of working with this participant group without adequate counselling support were the major issues that arose out of the project.

Some aspects of facilitation that bear closer inspection arose out of these projects: first, the nature of team facilitation that was the model used in all three projects; second, the dynamics of the entire group, particularly the facilitation of a collective working structure; third, the influence on facilitation from the involvement of professional counsellors in the process; fourth, the responsibility of the facilitator to a sponsoring agency; and fifth, the responsibility of the facilitator for the performance aesthetic.

All three projects utilized team facilitation effectively. It offered a way to plan and lead sessions using the strength of cooperative work. Team facilitation was used in the Safe House Project to accommodate the participation of the instructor and the three students. It continued through the other projects because it offered a working method which supported the principles of the facilitators.

The benefits of this approach are that facilitators are able to provide one another with on-going support and feedback; there are different perspectives to draw from in the process of setting objectives, planning sessions and addressing problems; the process is creative and dynamic because facilitators can build on each others' ideas; it takes the responsibility for the project off the individual facilitator; it is safer to try innovative ideas because it is possible to discuss consequences and there is back-up; the number of facilitators makes it possible to work with participants in small groups or one-on-one, which gives participants valuable individual attention; and the cooperative work of the facilitation team is a model for the participants who are encouraged to work cooperatively.

In the Safe House Project, team facilitation provided a structure for David Barnet to share his experience. The cooperative nature of the team also allowed the student facilitators to play an active role in planning by bringing in their observations and perspectives. Because of the discussion in team planning meetings, all the facilitators were able to play an equal role in the sessions with the participants even though they were much less experienced than Barnet.

In the other two projects, where the facilitators were all relatively inexperienced, the team provided the support that they needed to feel confident in the process. Particularly with inexperienced facilitators who may feel the need to create a controlled environment, team support allows for the open structure that is necessary if participants are to take ownership of the project. If the process is overly controlled the responsibility for the success of the project will remain with the facilitators or leaders.

Team facilitation meetings are a forum for constant evaluation of the process, the participants and the facilitators. These meetings provide an opportunity to deal with difficulties as they arise, as with the problem of leadership in the Youth Quest Project.

The main challenge of team facilitation is that group decision making and planning is time consuming and slow. Other issues can arise when the facilitators are not open and honest with one another, when one member of the team tries to take control or when the team is unable to reach a consensus of approach to the project. Team facilitation cannot function effectively under such strains on collective decision making; however, it is possible to work through these kinds of problems.

Factors that contributed to the facilitation team member's ability to work together were that they came from similar backgrounds and had all attended the University of Alberta Drama Department, where they had been exposed to similar teaching styles and attitudes towards theatre, with emphasis on improvisation and collective creation. Without such a shared background, teams would require more time to establish a common language and approach.

A major challenge of working with high risk youth is to find ways to encourage them to support each other and work together in spite of their low self-esteem and the protective barriers they set up for themselves. The key element to establishing a working relationship with them is to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. It is also very important for the facilitators to lay out their expectations and to be honest about what they are willing to offer to the participants in terms of support and friendship, both within the context of the project and outside the rehearsal hall.

Problems arose in these three projects because the facilitators did not clearly define their relationship with the participants. The facilitators became involved in the personal lives of the participants and were relied on to assist with crises that they were not trained to deal with. Lack of clarity in defining relationships also led to the confrontation in the Transitional Allies Project over the exclusion of participants in the formation of Concrete Theatre.

As I have said, one of the advantages of team facilitation is that it models the cooperative or collective working structure for the participants. The benefits of creating a collective working environment are that members of the group become a unit working toward a common goal; they learn to support each other; they discover the strength of collective action; and creativity is enriched through group discussion and multiple perspectives.

Collective play creation was the foundation of all three of these projects but it was impossible to create complete equality in the groups, given that the facilitators came from outside the community of participants. The participants worked collectively to develop the play, with the facilitators leading and guiding the process. Outside facilitators may remain distanced from a community because they do not share the same experience; consequently the significant part of their role in the structure is to offer theatre skills.

Using the term "collective" in relation to these three projects presents a contradiction that appears in much popular theatre work. In many cases, and certainly in the projects examined here, the facilitators and/or agencies that initiate projects are not members of the participants' community. The facilitators' main objective is to enable a marginalized community to find their voice, by helping the individuals to develop theatre skills with which to tell their stories and express their concerns. Collective play development is a highly effective way to do this because it draws on the strength of the community and promotes the power of collective action. Theatre facilitators bring their skills to the collective but they remain outside the shared experience and history of the community. The facilitator has a responsibility to know her or his role in the group and to guide the process without imposing her or his preconceptions, attitude or aesthetic. This is supported by Freire's writings, which acknowledge the presence of a leader in a collective but insist that they must act dialogically without imposing their decisions.

Related to the relationship of the facilitators and participants is the involvement of social workers or counsellors on a project with high risk participants. In the Safe House Project, the social workers' presence at the theatre sessions provided a safety net in the event of disclosures or other crises precipitated by the process that the facilitators felt unprepared to deal with, and provided on-going support to the participants that was consistent with the therapy program in the group home. The involvement of social workers in the project helped to create an environment where the participants felt safe to share personal stories and take emotional risks. This was reflected in the performance, which was very personal and reflected the strong emotional investment of the participants. The absence of trained counsellors in the other projects led to a conscious decision on the part of the facilitators not to ask the participants to share personal stories as a starting point to create material for the play; instead they asked for topics that could be included in the play and used them as the basis of improvisations.

The involvement of a counsellor in the Youth Quest Project and the Transitional Allies Project would have been valuable because the participants would have had someone to go to if they needed to talk about issues that were coming out as a result of the process; as it was, the participants dealt with these issues on their own. The intervention of a counsellor might have resulted in an easier resolution to the crisis that developed with Angel.

In retrospect, it was unwise to facilitate these projects without carefully considering the need for professional counselling support. The Safe House Project was unique because the social workers were able to connect the popular theatre process with the participants' group therapy. While the participants in the other two projects were not in the same situation as the Safe House participants, the theatre process had the same potential to bring back disturbing memories or to prompt disclosures. It is important for facilitators to recognize that their objective is to lead a popular theatre process not a therapy process. It would not necessarily have benefitted these projects to have a social worker in the rehearsal hall--in fact, it might have intimidated the participants--but the facilitators and participants might have made use of a counsellor who was available for consultation.

All three of these projects involved relationships with sponsoring or supporting agencies, with varying degrees of success. The objectives of the agency and the objectives of the facilitators and participants need to be compatible for a collaboration to function smoothly. This did not happen consistently with these projects. The relationship between Safe House and the facilitators was very strong because social workers from the house were directly involved in the process and understood and shared the objectives of the project. The problems with the YMCA in the Youth Quest Project resulted from a failure of communication between the facilitators and the YMCA at the start of the project. The YMCA administration had a different vision of the project than the facilitators.

The support of an agency can be very valuable to a project, as it was in the Safe House Project, but the relationship must be very clear. The facilitators need to know what an agency's expectations are, just as the agency needs to know what the facilitators expect. Some of the major advantages to working with a sponsoring agency are access to their resources, which may include professional counselling, technical support, rehearsal and performance space, administrative and financial support and on-going support for the participants after the project.

The role of the facilitator in influencing the theatrical style and aesthetic of the performance should be a major consideration in community based popular projects such as these, where the facilitator is providing theatre skills to a marginalized community. One of the main challenges is to find ways of creating a play that is clear and accessible to the audience yet maintains the integrity of the participants' voice. The facilitator must not filter the voice of the participants through her or his aesthetic values. It is very important to acknowledge that the participants' cultural images and styles are valid, but at the same time the facilitator has a responsibility to ensure that the performance is clear to the audience. The role of the facilitator may be as simple as making sure that the performers are audible and visible, but it becomes more complex if the facilitator feels that the audience will not accept the style of a scene, as occurred with "Sisters of the Street". In these three projects the facilitators were committed to giving control of style and content to the participants. The facilitators shaped this material, with varying degrees of skill, to make it more accessible to the audience.

In the Transitional Allies Project, and to some extent the Youth Quest Project, the facilitators tried to expand the participants' knowledge of theatrical styles, hoping that the participants would begin to integrate these ideas into their scene development. The facilitators were looking for a way to make the performances more theatrically interesting without imposing ideas onto the participants. This approach, though manipulative, gave the participants a way to integrate new styles into their work without feeling that any of their ideas were being rejected.

David Barnet had the skill and experience to shape the material that the participants created by translating the participants' ideas into effective theatrical images. The facilitators in the other two projects were not as skilled, which resulted in productions that were rough and at times unclear but, according to the audience members, nonetheless theatrically effective because of the passion and commitment of the performers.

There are some practical guidelines for facilitation that arise out of the comparison of these three projects. The guiding principle of facilitation is the willingness to allow the needs of the process and participants to lead the approach. This demands sensitivity to the participants and the flexibility to respond to developments in the process. The following guidelines provide some questions and issues to consider in facilitating a popular theatre project.

The first step in setting up a project, once the participant group is selected, involves setting the objectives for the project and possibly establishing a relationship with a sponsoring agency. It is vital that the facilitators know what they want the project to achieve and that the sponsoring agency understands and shares the facilitators' objectives.

The facilitators are responsible for creating a supportive and safe environment where the participants know that they are in control and will not be pressured. Games and exercises that develop trust and cooperative working skills are a way to build the group and establish working relationships. Sometimes a contract drawn up by the entire group is useful to establish expectations and to set some ground rules for rehearsal, such as regular attendance and giving everyone in the group a chance to speak. It is important for the participants to express their vision for the project and the play because it gives them power and control. From the beginning of the project the facilitators need to set boundaries for their relationship with participants.

There are different techniques which the facilitators can utilize to assist the participants in gathering material: improvisation, one-on-one storytelling, collecting research material or a combination. Through the story gathering process the facilitators need to support the participants to validate the stories that are being shared and encourage the participants to support each other. In this process the facilitators may take on the role of confidants.

In the process of dramatising material the facilitators have a responsibility to assist participants in telling their stories, using the styles they choose. There is a fine line between shaping the material so that it is effective and clear and imposing aesthetic values on the participants. The facilitators may choose to encourage the participants to give each other direction and make suggestions for scenes. If facilitators are asked to play roles in the scenes, coaching is a method for ensuring that the characters they are playing are congruent with the experience of the participants.

In the final phase of preparing the play for performance, the facilitators are often responsible for technical production because they have access to facilities and skills. The participants can assist with posters, programs, props, costumes, set and selecting music, which may give them an opportunity to develop or use other skills and talents. Selecting the performance venue for the show is very important because it is the environment for the production and needs to enhance the play without intimidating the performers. In these three projects the performances were held in spaces that were converted into theatres so that they had some of the technical elements of theatre without the formality of a theatre space. The technical elements of the show should be as professional as possible to show the participants that their work deserves to be supported.

In performance, facilitators support the participants by making them feel secure and setting up the performance situation so that they will succeed. This may include inviting a supportive audience to the performance and preparing them for the performance by explaining the process in an introduction. The participants can present the introduction. It is important that this kind of introduction not be interpreted as making an excuse for the quality or content of the show. The facilitators are an integral part of the performance whether they are playing characters or not.

There was very little formal evaluation of any of these projects. However, on-going evaluation was part of the team facilitators' meetings, as there was constant monitoring and discussion of the progress of the project and the participants. It would be valuable at the start of a project to set out some methods for evaluating the process in order to assess the effectiveness of the project. Some important questions to consider at the conclusion of a project would be: Did the project meet the objectives that the facilitators and participants set at the start of the process? What did the facilitators and participants learn? and What is the next step for the participants and the facilitators?

A final question for popular theatre facilitators is Does the process end after one project or is it a part of an on-going struggle? The participants who did all three of these projects moved from looking inward and telling personal and often painful stories to looking critically at ways to transform society. The facilitators who worked through these projects developed their skills and approaches along with the participants.

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